This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

SALVIA
RICHMOND

600078960-

BODLEIAN LIBRARY
OXFORD

SALVIA RICHMOND.

A Novel.

"And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?"—GENESIS XXV. 31, 32.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

BIBLIOTHECA
SEP 1877
BODLEIANA.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1878.

(*All rights reserved.*)

251. e. 585.

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	After the Party	1
II.	Salvia's Lament	18
III.	The Picnic	29
IV.	Flight and Explanation ...	71
V.	Catastrophe	108
VI.	The Missing Link	135
VII.	Confession	182
VIII.	Archer continues	237
IX.	Conclusion	254

SALVIA RICHMOND.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER THE PARTY.

THE rural dean was gone. The master of the foxhounds was gone. The other Blankshire notables had melted away to the four winds of heaven. Satchell had taken an early fly and the wings of the morning back to town. Solitude resumed her reign at the Priory. The housekeeper, having tied up her own upper portion in curl papers, was doing as much for the gaunt gilded furniture of the state drawing-room. That is to say, she and various sleepy *aid-de-camp* housemaids were encasing into brown holland body-cloths cer-

tain weird shapes with arms and legs, which might be, but were not, some distorted kind of race-horses. The great empty house was full of sounds and echoes. Logwood, the butler, seemed to be in a state of somnambulism. The two tall parti-coloured footmen were endeavouring to see which could yawn the widest, as they trifled aimlessly with a long array of unwashed wine glasses in their pantry. These two mighty beings, in their crimson plush and washed-out aspect, resembled a pair of drooping and flaccid peonies after a thunderstorm. The party, in short, was over. For a few days Sir Sidney and Lady Leyland were going to be alone, or, as the *Western Juno* more fashionably phrased it, were about to live in retirement for a week or so.

The baronet himself had not wholly escaped the lassitude which had descended upon his household. The excitement of his "brilliant hospitalities" (here again the *Western Juno* has assisted us) was over, and he was drowsing over that newspaper in his own morning-

room. My lady, alone of the Priory inmates, seemed to have escaped the prevailing epidemic of lassitude. She, at any rate, was moving about as if she had a purpose. This was rather strange, as she was, normally, almost as lethargic as the rest of the world were exceptionally on this especial morning.

As for Miss Brimley, her ladyship's maid, she had fallen by far the worst victim in the household to the blue devils of reaction. Brimley felt, to use her own words, a complete wreck. Black rims surrounded her eyes; her complexion, Brimley said, was worse than the lid of a copper saucepan. She was hovering, in short, on the verge of a nervous headache. Calypso-like, Brimley felt low at the departure of the Honourable Mr. Holster's gentleman. Brimley had been greatly fascinated by the marked attentions and varied conversational powers of that young valet. He wore his hair in what used to be called a Brutus top, and this had wrought much havoc on Brimley's susceptible heart. After his departure, Logwood

had become jealous and saturnine, and had spoken disparaging words about new brooms and mops and cauliflowers. But Logwood had been conversationally eclipsed by the visitor, and Logwood's own hair was very thin at the top. And Miss Brimley had begun to think that Logwood was not half the man that she had once supposed him; and Brimley felt that she did not care much one way or the other, in her present condition of wreckage; and Brimley knew she was very bilious, and wished she could go and lie down.

Her mistress, however, was on that morning unusually exigent, and gave her a dozen roving commissions up and down the house. Then her ladyship issued two contradictory orders at a breath, and rated Brimley soundly for not being in two places at once. The maid could not imagine whatever had come to her mistress; she was so unlike herself. Brimley pondered and pondered what could have given her good lady that strange turn while dressing yesterday. One must be

worried indeed, thought Brimley, to turn against diamonds and a velvet gown. Then why had her mistress been "ferreting" out old letters and reading *of* them? (Brimley employed the preposition "of" with a maddening frequency and superfluity.) Brimley found all these problems so tough and staggering, that she presently gave them up altogether. Her sick headache was quite enough to think about for the present. Thinking only gave her just then the "dazzles." Thank Heaven! her ladyship was done with at last. She made this reflection as she saw Lady Leyland sailing down the oaken staircase towards Sir Sidney's morning-room. Something unusual was in the wind, for her mistress seldom invaded that sanctum of the baronet's. Brimley heaved a sigh of relief, and brewed herself a potent half tumbler of sal-volatile. Then, feeling her nerves were getting the better of her fast, she retired to her couch and general despondency.

"Come in," said Sir Sidney, with a yawn, in response to a knock at his study door.

Lady Leyland entered in a stately manner, and subsided gracefully into an armchair. The baronet's looks seemed to express some surprise at her visit.

"Are you busy, Sidney?"

"Not more than usual. I am always busy, my dear." This was a fixed idea of Sir Sidney's, who believed himself to be one of the hardest worked men in England.

"I have come to ask you a question," his wife began.

Sir Sidney looked more surprised than ever.

"I do not like Mr. Satchell," said my lady, all at once.

Sir Sidney was absolutely dumbfounded. "Not like Satchell, my dear!" he exclaimed, as soon as he could collect his thoughts. "Well, there is no kind of need you should like Satchell."

"I fear that Mr. Satchell is exerting over you some influence of a dangerous kind," said his wife, in continuation.

"Satchell is my slave," said Sir Sidney, in his grandest manner. "I influence him. He

is my servant, my legal drudge, my hound. He fetches and carries as I bid him. Satchell influence *me!*"

"Then he fetched you something yesterday which caused you to look gloomy enough," retorted her ladyship.

"I allow it," cried Sir Sidney; "and suppose he did?"

"I wish you to tell me all about it," said his wife, in a calm, measured voice.

"My dear, you are not usually curious," said Sir Sidney, quite baffled by the directness of her request.

"The more reason to believe that I do not ask idly now," she retorted, quickly.

"I do not really think that I should be right in telling you," returned her husband, avoiding her glance.

"My suspense is intolerable," she persisted, placing her hand upon his arm. "I have a presentiment that something is wrong, that some misfortune is going to befall—one of us. I had such dreadful—dreams last night."

"I freely confess," said the baronet, in

pompous embarrassment, "that in the remote future the devolution of this property is beset with clouds of difficulty. By a remote future, my dear, I mean—ahem—when I shall in fact be no more. But you may accept my assurance that there is nothing in the subject of my interview with Satchell which need cause you any *immediate* anxiety; indeed, quite the reverse."

"I don't understand either 'devolution,' or 'clouds of difficulty,'" said her ladyship, with a puzzled face; "but if nothing unpleasant is going to happen until you are dead, Sidney, why should Mr. Satchell be pursuing any one for you while you are alive?"

"Who told you that?" demanded the baronet, turning suddenly upon his questioner.

Lady Leyland saw that she had made a slip. Her husband's cold grey eye was now watching her narrowly and with suspicion. Some reply she must make. "Mr. Satchell told me so himself," she said with a gasp.

"Too bad of Satchell!" fumed Sir Sidney,

rising and pacing up and down in annoyance. "I should never have supposed him capable of such an indiscretion. What right has Satchell to make you uneasy by hinting that suspicious characters are about? Satchell of all men to turn babbler! Confound the fellow! the port must have got into his head."

"I think it did," agreed Lady Leyland, coughing. "Ahem—you were saying, 'suspicious characters,' I think, Sidney?"

"I think Satchell is a sieve," ejaculated her husband; "but as you have been told, you may as well get the story right. Last night, Satchell pursued nobody, but somebody pursued Satchell all the way from Cornwall. That is why he did not care to travel on again to town after dark, and why he asked me to give him a bed—a thing he never did before."

"I suppose I misunderstood him," said her ladyship, slowly; "I noticed that he spoke thickly. And who followed him from Cornwall, Sidney?"

"Well, we are all in the dark as yet,"

confided Sir Sidney, lowering his voice. "And if you breathe a syllable of what I now tell you to a soul, the consequences may be serious both to Satchell and—ahem—to myself."

"I will be as silent as the grave," promised her ladyship, coming nearer.

"Then listen," pursued the baronet, speaking behind his hand. "My disreputable nephew, on whom the fishes are now banquetting, borrowed money on what they call his expectations—that is to say, for five pounds in hand then he gave a promise to pay, say fifty pounds when I have—departed. This dishonourable conduct of his will most seriously embarrass things here, Lady Leyland, when I cease to be. Fortunately, you have an independent estate, or——"

"Never mind about me," she interposed. "Go on, go on, I entreat you."

"The last loan," resumed the baronet, "which Julian raised before his immersion, placed him in possession of a good round sum

of hard cash; but Julian had a comrade, an infinitely worse blackguard than himself, whose name—let me see, what was his name? Forester—Barker—the name has slipped me." Lady Leyland had turned away, and was steadily looking out of the window. "Archer!" remembered her husband, all at once. "Yes; Gilbert Archer. Well, Gilbert seems to have robbed Julian. Thief rob thief. But, my dear, you do not seem to be attending——"

"Pray go on," said his wife, hoarsely.

"Satchell has even a graver notion," said Sir Sidney, waving his hand; "but here I do not go with Satchell. Anyhow, by worming about in his legal way, my lawyer gets traces of this Archer at Penzance—nothing definite, as yet. We are in a fog at present. Yesterday, on returning hither from these inquiries in Cornwall, Satchell is dogged by a man from Penzance to Stembury station."

"Dogged by a man!" echoed Lady Leyland. She sat halfway round, presenting only her profile.

"I wanted Satchell to have him arrested." A slight shudder from her ladyship. "But Satchell said we had no evidence as yet sufficient to sustain a criminal charge." Lady Leyland drew a long breath, and assumed an easier attitude. "But that need not at all discourage us," pursued the baronet, cheerfully, "as by this time Satchell will have sent down two of the sharpest detectives from Scotland Yard to Penzance."

Her ladyship murmured that it should not discourage her at all.

"And Satchell means to return to Cornwall himself," resumed Sir Sidney, warming with his subject, "so soon as ever London business arrears permit him. Consequently, when this suspicious character doubles round to his starting-point, he will, so to speak, step backwards into a trap; and we shall net him nicely."

"He will not go back," said his wife, in a decided voice.

"I cannot undertake," laughed Sir Sidney, "to speak for the rogue like you do."

Lady Leyland breathed a little quickly, and then, with apparent effort, said, "Thank you, Sidney, for your confidence. I have nothing more to ask."

"Don't let this worry you," said her husband, resuming his newspaper. "Satchell may have found a mare's nest. Another fortnight will decide."

"Yes," said Lady Leyland, wearily, "we shall see our way better in a fortnight."

For the present, however, she did not see her way further than back to her own room. Arriving there, she opened a tulip-wood escritoir, and freighted a *portemonnaie* to its very mouth with sovereigns. So tightly was the purse packed, that the dumpy leathern sides bulged out into a complete round with its metallic contents. Then, without summoning Miss Brimley, who had not yet weathered her sick headache, her ladyship selected from her wardrobe one of her plainest walking gowns, and an equally unobtrusive black bonnet. These preparations being completed to her apparent satisfaction, Lady Leyland

became as listless as the rest of her household; for she could only gaze out of the window across the verdant slopes and spreading oaks of her park, or pace restlessly to and fro in her room like a caged animal.

So the long day dragged its slow length towards dusk. The two Apollos were stretching their gigantic limbs from their afternoon repose; Miss Brimley was feeling a little better, and was sipping a dish of tea; Lady Leyland then thought she would take a walk, and she dressed herself in the quiet habiliments of that morning's selection.

Now, the broken Scotch fir and the deserted gamekeeper's ling hut lay due south of the Priory, but her ladyship began her walk in the kitchen garden, which lay to its north. Beyond the kitchen garden was a wood, and presently into this Lady Leyland extended her evening promenade; and at the back of this wood was a gate, which gave into the park. Lady Leyland subsequently passed through this likewise, and walked

rapidly across the turf towards the red cloud-streak, which marked the place where the sun had sunk an hour back. It was now growing rapidly dark, so that after going a furlong to the west, she suddenly shifted her direction; and, thenceforward, she turned her face steadily southwards towards the thunder-split pine tree. Arrived at this spot, she paused and hesitated. About a stone's throw to her right lay the ling hut. She glanced inside. It was empty. She stood wavering for a moment, and casting round her eyes in all directions. Presently, a low kind of whistle call, like the fern-owl's, came from the deeper recesses of the breast-high bracken. Towards this she went, and then the shadows of the thickening wood masked her from further view.

At about ten minutes to eight Miss Brimley was in a fine pucker in her ladyship's room at the Priory. Dressing time had long passed, and the dinner bell was imminent, and still there was no Lady Leyland. Her mistress had been seen, an hour back, pacing the

kitchen garden. Brimley could learn no more. What had become of her ladyship? Sir Sidney was not a gentleman who bore being kept waiting while his soup got cool, with equanimity. At last, three minutes before eight, when Brimley had given her up for lost, for drowned, for murdered, or for anything, according to the varying suggestions of Miss Brimley's nerves; in swept her mistress, perfectly safe and sound, and began to dress with an imperious kind of haste and a dogged air of resolution. Brimley aided and abetted her to the best of her power and speed, casting furtive side glances at Lady Leyland when she could get a chance. Brimley fancied she saw traces of weeping on her mistress's countenance; but Brimley redoubled her ministering efforts all the more after this discovery. Brimley was despatched presently to Logwood to procure five minutes' grace, and postpone for that period the ringing of the dinner bell. During Brimley's absence, Lady Leyland again unlocked her escritoir and replaced the *portemonnaie.*

It seemed as dumpy and swollen as when she took it out. If Lady Leyland had been out to meet a beggar, he was at least a moderate and unexorbitant mendicant.

CHAPTER II.

SALVIA'S LAMENT.

"I HAVE no presentiment of coming sorrow."

I have re-opened my journal and read these blind, foolhardy words, as ending my last entry in its pages. It seemed as if I had there written, "I mean to live," and then, having died in the interval and been buried, I had come up, as a quiet, white ghost, to peruse my own foolish falsified prophecy. Yes, I have died since those fatal words were inscribed. The best, the fairest part of me is dead and withered for ever. I shall walk about and eat and grow weary; I shall sleep and awake and go automatically through my trivial household duties. The outer shell of me will look much as usual. A little redness

round the eyes may last for a week or two; that will soon wear off. My face may seem rather sharper, if any one cares to look at me. I shall speak the same words, and my feet will tread the same valleys. But I am dead. I am a mere galvanized image of mortality, an automaton without a heart, a wire-drawn puppet, a withered thing that ought to be in a grave. For what is left me that is worth living for? How in any sense worthy of the name can this mechanical drag of mere physical sensation, which I have endured of late, since his final letter came, be dignified by the name of living?

I make my moan in the night, and no one hears me. I am awakened by the song of birds to another morning of desolation. The ploughman goes out to his labour, and the cottage wife feeds her chickens. The cows come by, lowing to their pastures. The sheep tinkle their eternal bells on the blue, hateful downs above me. The cloud comes on in its fair glory, and strides away over Stonesdale Ridge. We shall never sit there again;

never, never, never, in all the hours and all the days and all the centuries of God.

That iron letter of his! Why did he not come and tell me kindly that I, the mean village girl, could not mate with the great house; that the son of highborn knights, crusaders, and cavaliers, could only ally with lineage as gentle as his own? Why did he not tell me that I should disgrace those cold airy beauties, so conscious of their arms, and curls on the canvases of Vandyck and Kneller in the long polished picture gallery of his ancestors? Why did he come at all to Stonesdale Ridge, if all these dusty barons and dames of court, long dead, held the key and the charm that could say, "Thou shalt not love, except where we in our charnels give thee licence and leave to kiss"?

He wooed me as a poor man. He was always telling me that he lived by his pen; that his rich, haughty uncle gave him nothing, and had no control upon his life. Yet he left me on that last evening to consult this uncle, whether poor Salvia, the

nobody, would do even for the nephew whom Sir Sidney had left so long unnoticed? The great man's answer is plain. "Cast off this girl, or incur my lasting resentment. Remember of what race you come. I, the head of the Leylands, forbid this *mésalliance*." Yet the letter might have been kinder, even if our love was foolish, and must end. But its words were hooks of steel, and curved harrows of torment; its sentences were two-edged swords and jagged saws of agony. Why pile upon me all this dire armoury of martyrdom? I should have gone when you wrote me word to go away. I should have humbly taken my dismissal. Was it to silence some railing answer feared, that you threatened me with all these engines of pain? I will not even vex you with a written word, though part of your letter is dark, and seems to bristle with some terrible and unknown accusation. I will make no reply. Go! since you would be gone. What is it to me, who am, as you well remind me, too mean in birth to associate with Lady

Leyland? Yet why must you bring in this needless affront? "I could never ask my aunt to receive you." So you wrote. Well and good; that exclusion would not greatly affect me, if you had not forgotten faith. If you had not turned, like yonder wood, on whom the coming winter lays its withering hand; if you had not sold love, the immortal, the crowned, eternal god, for a piece of tarnished silver and a rag of worm-eaten pedigree. If you were tied, hand and foot, by the dim, dusty glories of the hard, proud race who would leave you to starve, as they left Julian Leyland to starve before you; why did you come to Stonesdale Ridge? You should have said, before you kissed me, "I am a gentleman, and you are quite a common girl; I mean nothing; I amuse myself; as a prince of the blood royal of Blankshire, I cannot choose where I would; one tires of partridge shooting, and the trout will not always rise; and, therefore, as the girl is passable and my uncle's highborn elegance is at times a little tedious—go to, we will

vary our amusements with just a little love-making; and when we are weary, we can end, and tell the girl to go about her business, and pester us no more; we need not heed her feelings—she is only a clergyman's daughter!"

Ah me! I have sat staring on this paper for an hour since writing these angry, bitter words. The mood of them is not mine; it is foreign to my soul. I loathe these scalding, hideous ironies, which pain has wrung from my pen. Life is too short for resentment. I have cried so long, Richard, that I must fain forgive thee at last. What good should I get by hating thee? My tears have washed thy fault away; I have wholly and irrevocably forgiven thee. I will think of thee as when thou first camest; I will remember the morning of our love, and forget how terribly its night came down. And now to get back somehow to the old way of things; to replace myself just as I was—ah! how impossible?—before this great calamity met me like a shadow in the peaceful pleasance

of my maiden life. And now to walk henceforward like a nun in a prim square piece of convent garden, immured within the grey, towering cloister walls. Let me water my three or four beds of sun-stinted shrubs; let me trim, to exact neatness, the edges of box; let me prune the solitary rose tree, whereon no rose buds ever come; let me roll the gravel path, and feed an old blind tench or two in a little green tank, whence I refresh my flowers; let me stray till the bell rings me in to say my prayers; and so let it be till I add one more to the quiet mounds, side by side, under the gnarled and lichened apple trees. Sister Elizabeth lies first—she never knew what love was; sister Bertha lies last—she died for love, heart-broken. The fat abbess says that sister Elizabeth is sure of saintship; of sister Bertha the fat abbess says naught, or, when pressed, only shakes her triple chin. God will decide. "These things lie upon His knees," as the grand old pagan said. To Bertha it is good to have met the shadow; to Elizabeth it is good

never to have seen it. Peace, thou mutinous heart; bear thy wound, and thank God!

Thus far was written peacefully, almost resignedly; but before I retire to rest—or enact the mockery of going to sleep, which that process signifies—I must add more, and it shall unflinchingly be added. I thought this morning that the cup of my sorrow was full. Alas! there were wanting a few last drops. They have been now poured in; and, Heaven knows, that their bitterness is as the bitterness of death.

Let me write it in common, homely, prosaic words. Late to-night old Peggy Tasker came in for some flannel. She is not strictly our pauper, inasmuch as she occupies a cottage of Mrs. Atherton's; but Peggy levies requisitions all round, and Mrs. Atherton is very "near," the poor people from about Tamerton tell me; and they say besides, that when she sends them a pint of water-gruel she makes more fuss about it than when the vicar of Redburn leaves a sovereign. All this I got from Peggy, who certainly "made

no fuss" in her own person about the flannel, for she bundled off the roll of stuff without a single "thank you." But Peggy told me more than this (mind, I mean to be cool and quite collected; I mean to write down the old woman's intelligence without comment or rhapsody; the pathos of plain announcement is best—I am weary of flinging about "wild and whirling" words); Peggy, to resume, in common with the other Blankshire poor, has no reticence whatever on such subjects as death, courtship, marriage, and the like, which our higher classes approach delicately or interdict from general discussion altogether. No sooner had she stated her clothing wants to an ell, in the tone of one who asked as a right and not as a charity, than, as a second appropriate topic, she said to me, without moving a muscle of her wrinkled face, or modulating her husky voice to any inflexion of sympathy—

"So thou hast lost thy young man?"

"Ah me!" thought I; "then all this foolish, staring parish knows already of my desola-

tion! How must I answer this crone? It is simplest and most straightforward to agree. Assent will preclude further argument." Therefore, in as unmoved a voice as my questioner's, I returned, "Yes, Peggy, I have lost my young man."

"Shall I tell thee how I knew it?" added Peggy, with a coarse chuckle of triumph.

"If you wish to, you may," I returned, for I was trembling just a little.

"Miss Edith come yesterday to our place with some broth," narrated Peggy, with great unction. "It is always poor stuff that her mother sends us as such, and this had got quite cold with lumps of fat at the top, as I made bold to tell my young lady, for I do not mean to humble to anybody."

"I don't think you do, Peggy. Pray proceed."

"I see the Atherton lass colour up at this, and out she flounced in a temper. Then our Samuel, just back from school, upped and told me. 'Grandmother, does thee know what cooled thy soup? She has been sweet-

hearting with that Leyland chap this hour past on her way here.' "

I refused to hear more, and dismissed the old beldam.

It is sudden, Richard Leyland! it is sudden!

CHAPTER III.

THE PICNIC.

About ten days after the events recorded in our last three chapters, Edith Atherton, in a state of very rosy and becoming confusion, rushed in upon her mother about noon, in the Tamerton drawing-room, exclaiming, "Oh, mamma, Richard Leyland has proposed to me!"

Mrs. Atherton folded her daughter to her bosom. "The dearest wish of my life, Edith, is fulfilled. That is to say, have you accepted him?" added the mother, rather anxiously.

Edith released herself from the maternal embrace, and drew herself up, both surprised and disappointed. "I have accepted him, of

course; and I really like him very much. But what has come to you, mamma?"

"Don't mind me, my love," evaded Mrs. Atherton, with a pre-occupied look; "I am sure that yesterday I could have cried with delight over this intelligence. Yet to-day, I am so bewildered that I hardly know where to turn. Well, well, no earthly pleasure is without its drawback. I shall realize this better by-and-by. You are a good, dear girl, and deserve to be well established. Bless you! Tell me how it all came about."

Edith laid aside her walking things and placed the little cloth-covered hand-basket and tin can on a low work-table near her. The young lady had sallied forth that morning ostensibly armed with the implements of a Lady Bountiful; but she had also managed to combine a little love-making with her other matutinal good works. "Richard was quite honest about it, poor fellow," began Edith, refixing a protrusive hair-pin; "and he spoke very nicely, and ingenuously. He told

me he had only a bruised and wounded heart to offer——"

"Pshaw!" interposed Mrs. Atherton; "men always say that!"

"He owned to having been greatly attached to Miss Richmond," pursued Edith, biting her lip, "although he never actually proposed to her."

"That I consider providential," the mother murmured; "for had he done so the girl would never have released him. Well?"

"He told me next," her daughter went on, with heightening colour, "that he discovered, all at once, that Miss Richmond was quite worthless, and indeed a person whom Lady Leyland would never have received. He said this disclosure had been a great shock to him."

"Serve him right!" insisted Mrs. Atherton, with a gulp. "This simpleton finds Miss Nobody perched upon a lonely hill, in a serge dress, reading a French novel——"

"Ossian is hardly French, or a novel, mamma," corrected Edith.

"It is translated, I understand, from the French," said the widow, loftily and carelessly. "But really, I am not versed in such literature. Be this as it may, Sir Simpleton, finding Miss Anyone on a mountain, asks for no account of her—not he; knows nothing of her antecedents; how should he? Assumes she is everything—perfect, correct, immaculate! Finds suddenly she is not; and then it is a great shock; and so forth. An idiot; serve him right!"

"Richard laid it all to Miss Richmond's having lost her mother so early," resumed Edith, rather sadly.

"Bah!" said Mrs. Atherton, uncharitably. "I dare say the mother was no great paragon. I hope he spared you the story itself about this girl."

"Yes; he said that the details were painful," replied her daughter, avoiding her parent's glance.

"He might have used a stronger phrase," was the widow's prompt rejoinder. "Painful indeed! Say rather scandalous, Mr. Mealy-mouth!"

"How came you to hear the tale, mamma?" demanded Edith, suddenly.

"Does not all the parish know it?" protested her mother, blinking her eyes very fast. "Does not every market-wife in Redburn gossip it over her teacup? Why, you put the question to me as if it were a blunderbuss. How do I know it? What next?"

"Richard told it me as the greatest secret," said Edith.

"Poor fool!" said Mrs. Atherton, laconically.

"Mamma!" exclaimed Edith, with indignation.

"He may burrow in the sand like a camel," went on Mrs. Atherton, still rather flurried, "if he fancies he can hide this scandal about that girl. Well, what said your lover next?'

"That is nearly all," concluded Edith, with eyes on the floor, "except that he then asked me to marry him. He said he was very poor; and that it was wholly uncertain what Sir Sidney could do for him.'

"Did he?" broke in the mother, savagely.

"Now, did he say that? Strange; that makes a second independent corroboration."

"I suppose it meant nothing," said Edith, absently. "Richard is diffident and unassuming, and I have always noticed that rich men say they are poor, and that poor men pretend to be rich."

"There is something in that," allowed the widow, with her head on one side, "and I trust and pray all will be right. I wish, however, Mr. Leyland had deferred his offer one day more. Our hands are so full to-day. What damped my reception of you just now, Edith, was that during your absence, visiting the poor, Mrs. Hammersley has been here with some very ugly rumours about the state of Sir Sidney's affairs."

Edith protested that Mrs. Hammersley was always making mischief, and never got hold of the right end of any story.

"Mrs. Hammersley has her uses," observed the elder lady, with dogmatic allowance. "You must know, Edith, that I had written to Lord Crowbury, respecting, in fact, the

living for this Meadows, and Lord Crowbury has, I regret to say, returned a rather evasive answer. Considering our relationship, and the fact that I never asked a favour of him before, he might have responded more to the purpose. Well, his reply nettled me, but it exasperated Mrs. Hammersley, who came over and abused my noble uncle roundly."

"What ever induced you to write, mamma, on this woman's behalf?" exclaimed Edith, in frank displeasure. "You seem to be like dough in her hands. It annoys me beyond expression that Lord Crowbury should have rebuffed you on her account. What persuaded you to intercede?"

"My foolish good nature, I suppose," replied the widow, with a cough; and, as she made the observation, she watched her daughter with some attention.

"I never knew you so pliable before," said Edith, flatly.

"Come," cried Mrs. Atherton, rising, "we must rouse ourselves and see where we are. Lord Crowbury must wait. Mrs. Hammersley

must wait. Events of the utmost importance are all crowding in upon us at once. Here are you, in the first place, engaged to Richard Leyland. Next, comes a rumour that Richard Leyland may prove no great *parti*, after all. Last, comes the clock facing me there, which tells me it is time for us to dress for Mr. Ivory's picnic."

"I meant to ask you, considering the circumstances, to go alone, mamma," pleaded her daughter, in a voice of entreaty. "You can understand how repugnant to me such an expedition has now become. The very sight of Mr. Ivory is barely endurable, and he is sure to begin paying me some of his fulsome compliments."

"I quite enter into your feelings," remarked her mother, "and things have certainly coincided in a most embarrassing manner. But, if you throw him over to-day, Mr. Ivory would never forgive you."

"I do not heed his unforgiveness much, mamma, now."

"He is my tenant," insisted Mrs. Atherton,

with keen emphasis; "and I cannot afford to get into his bad books. In short, my dear child, you must go to this picnic on the beacon, were it twenty times as distasteful. I regret—I very much regret that you should have been already through such a distressing ordeal as a proposal. But that is not Mr. Ivory's fault—rather his misfortune. Since, I presume, Mr. Ivory's suit must now be considered as dismissed, you will see the policy of not exasperating him further by a flagrant incivility."

"Then I suppose I must make the effort," said Edith, with a languid pout. "I don't think Richard will half like my going, if he hears of it."

"Hoity-toity!" exclaimed her mother; "this Mr. Richard is not everybody. We must see what his uncle is able to do for him before he can claim to control our parties of pleasure. Please remember that Mr. Ivory has twice postponed this picnic to meet our convenience. Please consider that he has got the champagne down expressly for

the occasion from Pall-Mall; and the raised pies and luncheon hampers from Piccadilly; and, after that, you calmly talk of throwing Mr. Ivory over! Really, Edith, I am surprised at you!"

"But as the pies would keep till another day," suggested the daughter, bridling up, "I think that my feelings ought to count before the cold pastry."

"But the guests won't keep!" retorted the widow, with asperity. "We invited the guests, and Mr. Ivory provided the food. He doesn't know one of them from Adam. It is too late to put them off. Besides, our tenant builds on this, as the first instalment of introduction to our county society, which I have agreed to do for him. Let us lose no further time, I beg, or we shall have our entertainer and his unintroduced guests glaring at each other helplessly across an unpacked hamper on Sawney Beacon."

"A sight for men and for angels," added Edith, forcing a smile. "But that's not my worst apprehension. If Mr. Ivory will con-

fine himself to doing the honours of the lobster salad, and cultivating his Blankshire neighbours, I shall be bored, of course, but I shall not mind the entertainment. But I am dreadfully afraid that I may have to receive a second proposal, which will be both painful and absurd."

"Say no more, but come and dress instantly," urged her mother, anxious to close the discussion and get Edith, at all hazards, under way.

So the two ladies adjourned to the upper regions of Tamerton Grange, to complete some needful embellishment before their coming junket.

Sawney Beacon was a richly wooded limestone eminence, commanding the village of Redburn from the north. At the time of the Spanish Armada it had constituted one of a chain of beacons from the sea-board inland in the direction of the mother city. No doubt Sawney Beacon did its duty manfully then; but, since the dispersion of the dons, it had never been called into second requisi-

tion as a night-piercing signal of war. It commanded a spacious outlook into half a dozen shires, and was in summer-time much frequented by picnic parties; to such degenerate uses had its martial memories succumbed. The goodly number of broken soda water bottles, oyster-shells, old sandwich papers, and sherds of willow-pattern plates, suggested achievements more recent and less noble than those of Drake, Frobisher, or Howard.

Mrs. Atherton sat on a camp-stool at the side of a hand-cart, superintending the exhumation of the wine and the provisions. Two stalwart sons of toil, in Ivory's employment, had tugged the load to the summit, and one would have felt more comfortable respecting the pie-crusts, if the two steaming sons of toil had had the good taste not to stand over the load while it was being unpacked.

Ivory was radiant as an Eastcheap Apollo, in a white hat, a white waistcoat, a magenta scarf, and lilac trowsers, an exotic in his

button-hole, and an enormous bouquet for Edith on the ground beside him. From the careful way in which he removed and replaced his hat, on being presented to his guests, there is reason to think that a barber must have been sent over from Stembury to arrange his clustering ringlets. His patent-leather boots were astounding in their lubricity; his lemon-coloured gloves were of a marvellous tightness; diamond link-buttons adorned his wrists. He seemed to have bathed in the fountain of rejuvenescence; to have shed off ten years at the bottom of the hill. His geniality knew literally no bounds. Mrs. Atherton was in great affability, and wore her best watered silk dress. Edith looked tired and out of spirits, but, in spite of either drawback, highly attractive.

First among the guests, strange to us, came the Swindon Barkers, a pointlessly genteel, middle-aged couple, who grew tulips and competed at flower and poultry shows. Next was Charlie Mayne, an effete, elderly young man, with an eyeglass, pendent

whiskers and a light imperial; he hunted a little, shot a little, and played the piano a very little; he had been in the militia with the late Captain Atherton. Charlie Mayne was the cynosure of the elderly young ladies of Blankshire. One of these, Miss Matilda Whiffle, had been now asked for his especial benefit. She had a face like a Ribston pippin, and was the sunny side of fifty. She dressed very tight and very youthfully, and seemed to be rather feeble on her feet. There was also Mr. Delvey Podge, a Blankshire magistrate, the person of the most consideration present. He brought two wizen, hatchet-faced daughters, in white muslin and long blue sashes. As pendents to these last, had been invited a brace of Oxonians, reading in Blankshire during the Long Vacation. Such were the ingredients of the picnic party, who on the present occasion rallied round Sawney Beacon and Mrs. Atherton.

As a humbler social factor of the assembly came Thomas, with his buttons in a state of the highest polish. He collided much with

Mrs. Atherton's coachman, who, having put up his horses at the Merlin, came up, under orders, to assist in the waiting. One felt, however, that, at such an altitude above the level of the sea, his top-boots were a solecism; and that his cockade presented rather a jarring and discordant element in the scenery. The matter does not admit of argument, but one would have as soon expected to see a coachman, fully equipped, at the mast-head of a man-of-war, as upon Sawney Beacon. Against Thomas's presence no analogous objection could be advanced. Thomas seemed much more native to the place; in fact, he was rather too much so. One of his proceedings will show this. Just as he was helping Charlie Mayne to some aspic of chicken, some rooks settled on the turf sixty yards to the left of the feasting party. The force of early associations proved so strong with the lad, that, baulking the captain in the middle of his help, he instantly deposited the side dish upon the grass, leaving Mayne helpless with the spoon, and proceeded to clap his

hands at the crows, and scare them away with the not unmusical shouts of his former calling. Mrs. Atherton blushed crimson, and chided Thomas fiercely into the background. Here he languished awhile in exile, but, presently regaining his spirits, he managed to tilt over upon Mrs. Swindon Barker's chip bonnet some portion of a dish of iced gooseberry fool. Last, in carrying a raised pie, he wrecked against a jutting out ledge of limestone, and fell heavily, head foremost, dividing the pie-dish and its contents into three fairly equal fragments. Altogether, Thomas could not be pronounced a success that day upon Sawney Beacon.

So the guests fell to their grass-spread banquet, and things got on pretty well. There was plenty to eat, and the day was fine. They were not more uncomfortable than is usual at such out-of-door festivals. One learns, at any rate, to appreciate the advantages of a raised table when none is forthcoming; and the unexpected bumps and equally sudden depressions in the ground-

laid cloth may be exciting, but are not convenient. Then the salt is sure to be left behind, and bread is always forgotten, and the corkscrew can never be found, and no sooner found than it is mislaid again. The only place where salt is to be had is in the cream ice, just where it is not wanted. Why, too, will the daddy-long-legs on such occasions pertinaciously fancy that he has some prescriptive right to the custard? But the champagne always covers a multitude of shortcomings, and a whole array of minor casualties. The champagne is the sheet anchor of a picnic party. Without that iced effervescent fluid all such junkettings would be no better than parties assembled to hear a will read. The cheery welcome of the tinselled cork bounding away into space, and the little curl of smoke that follows it—these make the picnic bearable and preserve it from hideous insipidity or intolerable boredom. O sprightly grape of Gaul, you make the dumb speak, and the sullen smile; you make one forget all petty annoyances and

discomforts of the moment; you brighten the eyes of the turf-seated damsels, and render the swains at their feet loquacious and complimentary!

After a glass or two, even poor, faded Charlie Mayne began to chirp and perk up feebly. He turned to the lovely Thais at his side, in the person of Miss Whiffle, and he remembered how he had picnicked twenty years before—exactly twenty years—when Miss Whiffle, then a *débutante* in Blankshire, had also on that occasion, but more blooming, sat beside him. Many oyster-shells and soda water bottles had gathered, as autumn leaves in Vallombrosa, thick around Sawney Beacon since that day. But poor old Charlie's withered heart warmed with the champagne and the remembrance; and he quite simply reminded Miss Whiffle of that immemorial picnic.

The damsel appealed to coughed down this indiscreet reminiscence by asking hurriedly for a chicken wing. Indeed, she and Charlie Mayne were exact contemporaries, and had

seen many generations of Blankshire youth in their time. They were perennial institutions at Blankshire fêtes or at Blankshire winter balls. The silly young folks laughed at them, and made bets on their respective ages. Half Blankshire held Charlie Mayne the oldest, the other half Matilda Whiffle. The solution of these doubts was shrouded in the mists of antiquity. Just as the roc and the dodo might be supposed appropriately to flirt together in an assembly of more recent and ephemeral winged species, all Blankshire believed in a chronic love affair between Charlie and Matilda. One wag expected their banns to be published about the commencement of the twentieth century, unless parents and guardians then intervened on the score of extreme youth in each of the contracting parties.

"You don't see this kind of thing in the City, Mr. Ivory," observed Mr. Swindon Barker, pointing his fork over the mapped expanse of the distant shires below them.

"A glass of wine with you, Mr. Barker,"

responded Ivory, cheerily, helping himself to the greater portion of a lobster salad. "My existence had hitherto been cooped in," with a circular arm movement, which ended in hurting his knuckles against Thomas's vertical array of buttons, who was then ministering upright behind his semi-recumbent mistress. "I have been cabined, cribbed, and confined. The industrious bee has to work in a contracted space, while the roving butterfly, so to speak, warehouses nothing in particular. The bee makes his fortune, and puts up with the confined atmosphere of the hive. But, let me tell you, Mr. Barker, —your good health, sir—that I mean to see a great deal of this kind of thing in future. Such a prospect of English farms and shires does me good here, Mr. Barker," tapping his manly breast. "Captain Mayne, will you circulate the champagne? I think Miss Whiffle might be persuaded to take another thimbleful."

Miss Whiffle was obdurate as to the thimbleful, but ultimately yielded on the

subject of a full glass. She whispered to Charlie Mayne, that she adored self-made men, and really now, what Mr. Ivory had said about the bee was quite poetical.

"I am pleased to find that you take to Blankshire and to Blankshire men, Mr. Ivory," pursued Mr. Swindon Barker, wiping his moustache.

"I hope to take root in Blankshire," Ivory responded, with a tender glance in the direction of Edith.

"Dooced good fishing in Blankshire," threw in Charlie Mayne; "dooced good shooting in Blankshire." Here the captain paused, adding disjointedly, "For a fellow."

"I am passionately fond of field sports, Captain Mayne." Let us hope Ivory said this in the excitement of the champagne.

"So am I," said Charlie Mayne, simply "I can't make it out how some fellows don't seem to care about riding. Dooced good hunting in Blankshire, Mr. Ivory."

"Captain Mayne," said Ivory, solemnly, "I am delighted with Blankshire; and if all

the Blankshire ladies are as charming as those assembled round the present festive board—no, I will say table-cloth—I see small chance of a new settler among them having the heart to tear himself away. I, for my part, mean to take root, like the juniper."

Miss Whiffle blushed extremely, and told Charlie Mayne, in a loud aside, that Mr. Ivory's compliments were quite embarrassing.

"We shall be having you on the bench presently, Mr. Ivory," said Mr. Delvey Podge, speaking for the first time in a sepulchral voice from the right of Mrs. Swindon Barker, at the further end of the table-cloth.

Mr. Podge, like a prudent man, had hitherto post-habited conversation, which could be had any day, to *pâté de foie gras*, which came only, as he told his eldest hatchet-faced daughter, once in a blue moon.

Ivory simpered with pleasure at the compliment, and murmured that Mr. Delvey Podge was very kind to mention his humble name in so flattering a connection.

"The magistracy," pursued Mr. Delvey Podge, in a dead pause, "is an institution of which England may well rest proud."

"A bulwark against democracy," added Mr. Swindon Barker, with his mouth full.

"A very nice set of fellows," was Charlie Mayne's comment; "and good preservers of foxes to a man."

"I could never go to bed in security at night," lisped Miss Whiffle, "if it were not for the protection of the magistrates. I adore them."

"If I could write upon my gravestone," broke in Ivory, with enthusiasm, "'A justice of the peace for Blankshire,' I should die content."

This, oratorically speaking, took the trick. A murmur of applause succeeded a sentiment so appropriate.

"The English magistracy," resumed Mr. Delvey Podge, flushed with these praises, "deserves indeed the study and imitation of continental nations. Here are a body of gentlemen, whose keystone is land. They

are called to exercise high judicial functions without any previous study of law, and without any particular qualification for the task. They respond to the call manfully; and, guided by their plain British common sense, and sustained in their office by the respect which, I am thankful to say, is accorded to the possession of a large income from land, our magistrates have triumphed over all obstacles."

"And much detraction," said Swindon Barker, shaking his head.

"That is going against the Bible," explained Mr. Delvey Podge, mildly. "Magistrates are, we are told specially, not to be evil spoken of. We may make a slight mistake now and then."

"No," from Ivory, resolutely.

"But the importance of such a tribunal, as a social power, largely outweighs any paltry slip in law and justice. The malefactors brought before us may not, now and then, be guilty of the charge on which we convict them, but they are probably guilty

of some other crime, so that substantial justice is done."

"How ably Mr. Podge speaks!" said Miss Whiffle, with uplifted eyes.

"Know a case; poacher," explained Charlie Mayne; "got two months; snaring hares; turned out to be wrong man; keeper reprimanded by bench; didn't like it; searched fellow's house; found a cock pheasant; served him right." Charlie Mayne being shy, as his tender years would lead one to expect he would be, and being unversed in consecutive narrative, especially before an audience, often became fragmentary, as above, when he had anything to say beyond a single sentence.

"An excellent illustration," said Ivory, nodding, "If, hereafter, I have sufficient stake in the county—and I think I may, without presumption, predict that such a stake will be forthcoming—may I look to your kind offices, Mr. Podge, to recommend my humble name in the proper quarter?"

"You may," said Mr. Podge, as he scooped

out the remainder of the *pâté de foie gras*, and smacked his lips; he might as well, he thought, exact some pre-payment in kind for his promised recommendation.

By this time the feast waned and languished. Most of the guests had long since pushed away their plates. Mrs. Atherton thereupon gave the signal to rise from the grass; and the attendants began to clear away the remnants of the orgy.

The party then began to hover about in groups of twos and threes, uncertain how to divert themselves for the remainder of the evening. In the background, only partially masked by a fragment of upright rock, Thomas, the coachman, and the two sons of labour then settled down to rather riotous saturnalia upon the bottle-ends and the half-eaten dishes.

The evening had closed in—a warm delicious autumn evening, without breath or breeze. The moon, a broad, silvery disc, was rising on the horizon below them. In the deepening shadows behind the party, could be

discerned the staggering outline of Thomas, a lobster claw in one hand, and a champagne bottle in the other; his buttons giving out, now and then, a restless gleam. Clear-cut against the sky-line, impending over Thomas like the crest of a morion, was the coachman's cockade.

Mrs. Atherton, as the quasi hostess, felt that some direction must be given to the energies of her vacillating guests, so she said, "I propose, Mr. Ivory, that we break up our circle for an hour. It is a charming moment for a stroll in the twilight."

"An excellent suggestion, my dear madam," agreed Ivory, exuberantly. "Miss Atherton, will you let me show you a romantic mountain spring, about half-way down the hill towards Redburn?"

"I am a little tired," said Edith, with some reluctance, but, happening to catch at that instant her mother's eye, she added at once, "but I am quite ready to go."

"Will you take care of Edith's shawl, Mr. Ivory? I must insist on her taking it," said Mrs. Atherton.

"Proud of the commission," exclaimed Ivory, strutting chivalrously away. "I will take, my dear madam," he added meaningly, "the greatest care of the shawl, and of its fair owner."

"Captain Mayne," continued the hostess, appealing to a recumbent form, "will you do the honours of the Beacon Wood to Miss Whiffle?"

No reply.

"Captain Mayne," repeated Miss Whiffle herself, seconding the hostess, "I am told that there are nightingales sometimes in the Beacon thickets. Do let us try and hear a nightingale."

Alas! the captain was mute to this appeal. He had dozed, as he always did at home, after dinner. The sounds proceeding at the present moment through his somnolent nose, were all the answer he vouchsafed to Miss Whiffle's challenge to let her hear a nightingale.

The mature young lady turned away in a pet, and had to put up with the married

Mr. Swindon Barker. "Charlie Mayne is getting very old and stupid," she observed, rather spitefully to his substitute, when they were a few yards distant.

"Charlie Mayne is no chicken," said Mr. Swindon Barker, lighting a cigar. "Don't object, Miss Whiffle, I presume?"

"I adore it out of doors, Mr. Barker," responded his companion, gushingly. "It is very absurd in Charlie Mayne dressing himself so young. He seems to be breaking up fast. I remember his hair had begun to turn grey before I came out."

The Blankshire harvest moon saw a blush rise, even through the powder, on Matilda Whiffle's roseate cheek, as she made this astounding statement. But that blush was not seen by Mr. Swindon Barker, upon whose arm she presently passed away into the darkness. Let us hope they heard many nightingales in the Beacon Wood.

Ivory and Edith were by this time some way down the hill-side.

"I never saw so broad and splendid a

moon," observed Ivory, "out of the back scene of a London theatre."

"It steeps the tree-tops in frosted silver," said Edith, who was thinking of something else.

"Quite like all Hunt and Roskell's shop," suggested the money-lender; "the effect is really sumptuous."

"See," Edith went on, "how prettily the beams glow through the lattice-work of Redburn Church belfry! It seems on fire from within; and, see, that blue strip of cloud, with one white star beating through it. How much moonlight improves a church! it gives, indeed, quite a heightened interest to a scene as familiar to me as this clock tower and churchyard. By daylight, I should never notice any object in Redburn village."

"Then let us visit it by moonlight," suggested Ivory, quickening his pace. "I am not a poetical man, Miss Atherton; but I think I remember at school something from Walter Scott; eh?"

"Oh, they are hackneyed lines!" quoted

Edith, a little contemptuously. "Every child is set them to 'commit'—

> 'He who would view fair Melrose aright
> Must see it in the pale moonlight.'

Still, they are in point at present."

"This is the churchyard gate," said Ivory, with a tender tone of persuasion; "let us go in."

"I hardly like to enter," Edith replied, as they passed through the wicket of the lich-gate. "All those white-faced gravestones look so weird and solemn. One might almost fancy their black lines of letters into features. I was never in a churchyard at night before."

"Are you superstitious?" inquired her companion, hardly masking the contempt with which he propounded such a question.

"Who is not, more or less?" Edith returned, with a certain sadness. "We have all within us some latent germ of belief in phantoms which appropriate time and circumstance are sure to evoke."

"As a practical man," blustered Ivory, swelling his chest out—"as a man of busi-

ness, I am beyond and above such childish nonsense. I should like to see the ghost who could frighten Rupert Ivory. Pooh! I defy the whole brood of them!—white sheets, raw heads, cross bones, shrouds, goblins, imps, and incubi. I don't believe in one of the lot; the dreams of a drunken clown stumbling home from his ale-house. Rupert Ivory believes in matters more substantial—in pounds, shillings, pence, in ledgers and double entries, shares and dividends. There is no nonsense about them. Ghosts indeed! They dare not show *me* their faces. I am a practical man!"

During this speech Ivory had sat himself down on a square gravestone near the church door, which marked, in fact, the sepulchral receptacle of the Digweed family; and between his repudiation of superstition and his recently taken champagne, he had worked himself up into a state of some excitement.

"You gentlemen are always so courageous," sighed the young lady, picking an ivy leaf from one of the humbler mounds;

"I am only a weak girl, you know. 'Tis our sex's privilege to be nervous. But I am already beginning to get used to the place. As for you, Mr. Ivory, you remind me at this moment of Hogarth's idle apprentice."

"With my attitude," returned Ivory, in a boastful voice—the chance had come for which he had all day been waiting, and he now determined to put his fate with Edith to the test—"with my attitude, Miss Atherton, the resemblance ends. I have been a successful man. I am not ashamed of my beginnings. I have amassed a colossal fortune by my own energy and enterprise. Everything has thriven with me. I could buy up half these proud squires round about. Miss Atherton—Edith Atherton, I have something to say to you."

"Not now," entreated Edith, recoiling hurriedly; "not here, I beg of you, Mr. Ivory; neither the hour nor the place is at all suitable for your communication."

"And pray why not, Miss Atherton?" he demanded, in rather a menacing tone for a lover.

"Ask your own sense of decency. Think of all these dead men round. Besides, Mr. Ivory, I am tired, weary, not myself. The associations of this place have depressed me. In pity, say what you have to say in a few days' time, among surroundings more appropriate; and what you say will receive both from me and from mamma our best attention."

By chance the church door happened to have been left open. The sexton's wife had been cleaning and scrubbing inside during the day, and, to dry the pavement quicker, all inlets of air had been taken advantage of. When Edith turned away from Rupert Ivory, this open door caught her view. It seemed to her, flurried as she was, a providential haven of safety from the coming storm of his importunity. She therefore hurriedly passed inside the building and retreated up the nave to the chancel, leaving Ivory outside upon his tombstone.

"He will surely," she thought, "have the decency to forbear pressing upon me his pro-

posal here. I shall thus gain a little time to consider what I ought to do."

Edith, however, little knew her man, if she supposed that the sacred edifice could protect her in the least degree from Ivory's solicitations. As a practical man, the money-lender was wholly impervious to any reverential feelings associated with the spot. He had something to say, and he would say it, wherever he was. He had an object to gain, and he would push and elbow an archbishop as soon as a sweep, if that dignitary stood between him and what he sought. He would have cast up a bill on a coffin without the least compunction, if he could have got his money an hour the quicker by such a proceeding. Thus, no sooner had Edith taken refuge in the chancel, than Ivory came gaily in pursuit, swinging her shawl and clattering up the nave.

"So, my fair young lady," he growled, in a bullying voice, "you think to shake me off, do you, by beating this ecclesiastical retreat? Let me tell you, however, my fascinating

fugitive, that by running to earth among these chancel tombstones and old recumbent stony-faced gentlemen, you have, without meaning it, supplied the best clinical subjects for the lecture, which I shall take the liberty of reading you, if I find I have been anticipated by any rival in your affections."

"Consider where we are, Mr. Ivory," said Edith, with a shudder.

"By God!" cried Ivory, coarsely. "You are playing with me, Edith Atherton; and I know perfectly well on whose account you are putting me off and shilly-shallying."

"You are very rude. You are quite forgetting yourself, Mr. Ivory."

"Where are we? By jingo!" he vociferated, clenching his hand, "why, here in Redburn Church; there is Parson Richmond's reading-box—Sal Richmond's father, whom we are jealous of; there, Mr. clerk's wooden compartment, who drawls, 'Amen;' here, a lancet window, with moon and gravestones apparent through it; last, not least,

what have we here?—two life-sized worthies upon their couches, saying their prayers: forefathers, I think, of the present beggar-on-horseback house of Leyland."

"I shall endure this no longer," said Edith, indignantly, trying to glide past her persecutor out of the church.

Ivory seized her by the wrist, and forced her back upon one of the chancel seats. "You shall hear me out," he hissed, still retaining his grasp upon her hand. "I am an honest man, and my offer is the greatest compliment which an honest man can pay you. You *shall* listen, were we in twenty churches. You can listen to others readily enough in the Tamerton lanes."

"I will listen to whom I choose," said Edith, resolutely. "Spying will not advance your suit an inch; nor, for the matter of that, will blustering either."

"Who are these two knaves on their backs," indicated Ivory, suddenly changing the line of his attack, "who have brought their dogs to church with them? They are

too good to lie out there under the turf, with the common folk."

"Answer yourself," said Edith, disdainfully; "you know as well as I do. They were at least gentlemen in their day."

"Ay, ay!" sneered Ivory, with a darkening face; "these are the famous Leyland Crusaders. You fought at Acre, my boy, under Richard Lion-heart; and you other were first in at the breach at Ascalon. I think they call you 'Sir Hugh.' Whatever you were, my gentlemen, I have bought you both, root and branch, with the rest of the family furniture. I have bought up those proud beggars, your descendants, the fine Sir Sidney, and our fascinating Richard. Within ten years for certain—within one year, possibly—I, plain and blunt Rupert Ivory, shall sit as lord and master under the roof-tree of Redburn Priory. The home of these Leylands will have forgotten them. Their place in Blankshire will know them no more!" Thus concluded the money-lender, in his fierce excitement almost foaming at the mouth.

"Have you done at last?" was Edith's sole and cold rejoinder. "Am I now permitted to go? If so, have the goodness to release my hand. Your touch is offensive to me."

Ivory flung her hand roughly from him with an oath. "Marry Richard Leyland now, if you please," he said, with a coarse laugh; "marry a dunghill, or the workhouse."

"Rest assured," returned Edith, her bosom heaving, "that I shall never marry *you*, Mr. Ivory, after your conduct here. I believe you speak truly about Redburn, for I have heard some side rumours of this before; but, if you owned half Blankshire, after your disgraceful exhibition to-night, I should reject you with scorn and loathing."

"By the Lord! Edith Atherton, you may presume too far on my forbearance!" snarled Ivory, with an evil leer.

Yet, though he still kept a hard, impudent face on the business, he was beginning to feel a little crestfallen and disappointed. He had played his trump card, and nothing

had come of it. The thunderbolt of his future possession of Redburn had not made Edith one jot less scornful to his suit. She did not quail nor cringe before him; her looks expressed aversion, but not fear. He felt his factitious courage ebbing fast away.

"Forbearance!" echoed Edith, disdainfully. "If this is your forbearance, what must be your exasperation? You are valiant against a defenceless girl; you are valorous against these sleepers."

"You goaded me to it!" he expostulated, in a rather humbler tone; "you refused to hear me; you trifled. Now I yield to no living man in my right to be heard."

"Yet you might respect the dead!" she exclaimed, with flashing eyes. "I can only wonder that you dare to stand in this sacred place, at this solemn hour, and heap indignities upon the harmless patient dead of this noble family, whom, you tell me, you mean to supplant. It is enough to make the buried Leylands come up from their graves, and punish your irreverence."

"We are not afraid of you, old fellow!" sneered the money-lender, with a return of his former coarse arrogance, as he insolently patted the cold marble cheek of the recumbent knight. "If, as in old wives' tales, the grave could render back its tenants, I have no cause to fear any Leyland buried beneath these chancel flags. One of the proud, beggarly race alone might owe me a sepulchral grudge. Him I should not care to see. But he lies not here. When the sea gives up her dead, I will fear him, and not before!"

At this instant a cloud left the moon face suddenly, and her beams shone out full in a lane of splendour upon the side lancet window of the chancel wall, which had been shrouded and dark a second before. Ivory and Edith were standing with their backs towards this window; but the money-lender turned himself first towards the inflowing rays, surprised at their sudden effulgence. Among those rays outside, pressing itself up close against the window-pane, and peering eagerly in, Ivory saw—a face! One glance

at those moonbeam-lighted features was enough for the money-lender. He gave a howl of abject terror and dismay, and then fell swooning with a crash upon the stone floor of the chancel. At his cry Edith turned, but by then the face was gone; at her feet lay Ivory bleeding and insensible. So, as best she could, she rushed horror-stricken from the church, to procure assistance.

CHAPTER IV.

FLIGHT AND EXPLANATION.

MRS. ATHERTON entered Edith's bedroom with perplexity in her countenance. Miss Atherton had risen very late, for she felt ill and exhausted by the agitations of the previous evening. Her toilet was as yet hardly completed.

"I am bothered off the face of the earth!" exclaimed her parent, slamming the door. "I see nothing for it but that we should pack up bag and baggage and be off on a fortnight's visit to my widowed sister in Norfolk."

"No bad idea," concurred Edith, moodily. "All these complications make me loathe this neighbourhood. You will not find me back-

ward to go. But my maid tells me that Mr. Ivory has just been here. What did the dreadful man say for himself?"

"He came with his arm in a sling," proceeded her mother, with slow emphasis, "and he had an ugly cut on his forehead. He was very penitent, and looked much shaken."

"Serve him right, the wretch," said Edith, vindictively.

"He asked me," pursued the mother, trifling with her handkerchief, "to intercede with you for his pardon."

"I will never forgive him," from Edith, stamping her foot; "not if you went on your knees to me, mamma, from here to Stembury."

"My dear child," rebuked Mrs. Atherton, putting up a finger of reproof, "this vehemence is unlady-like. Your poor papa was overcome on several occasions, and it did not materially disturb our conjugal harmony. The habit we ought to condemn; but merely once or twice in a way is venial."

"Well, I suppose I must hear what he has

to say. Go on; as he has persuaded you, mamma, to be his intercessor—the ogre!—I shall be forced, I know, to hear his defence. Shorten it, I beg of you, as much as possible, and get it done."

"Mr. Ivory lays it all," the mother extenuated, drawing up her chair, "to the last bottle of champagne which was corked, and did not amalgamate with the lobster salad; then you vexed him very much about Richard Leyland, and by refusing to let him propose to you. And these vexations, combined with the champagne, so unhinged him that he fears he must have said some very rude things."

"And I fear so, too," concurred Edith, coldly.

"Well, a man does not like being baulked in a proposal," Mrs. Atherton, in palliation, submitted; "especially if he suspects a rival, and has partaken a little freely of champagne. These varied emotions, he told me, induced a sudden rush of blood to his head, and ended in some kind of fit."

"Neither rival nor champagne," retorted Edith, with a toss of her curls, "would have converted a gentleman into a raving bull, a coarse, abusive clown, a blustering, insolent counter-jumper. Why, the ostler at the Merlin, who ran over at my suggestion to pick up this overthrown braggart, is a gentleman in his manners, compared to Mr. Ivory, when rubbed against the grain."

"The habit of self-repression," observed Mrs. Atherton, sententiously, "is only acquired after many generations of transmitted gentility. It is the true *cachet* of the aristocratic caste, and of our best English blue blood. Mr. Ivory lacks it, no doubt; but it is only on rare occasions in life that such a defect in him will become apparent. And then, my dear, just consider his wealth and his expectations."

"This man is an undiluted cad," said Edith, emphatically. "The word is not a nice one, but no other fits him so well. I won't marry him. There! So do not waste any more breath, mamma, in suggesting it."

"This man will be owner of Redburn Priory," said the widow, with a steady glance at her daughter.

"Is this certain, mamma?"

"Beyond contest and dispute. Mr. Ivory showed me a letter this morning from Mr. Satchell, of Gray's Inn, Sir Sidney's lawyer, in which I read it as an allowed fact, in white and black, that at Sir Sidney's death the Priory and the Priory estates would pass into Mr. Ivory's uncontrolled and absolute possession."

"How did he get them?"

"To that, my dear," said the mother, with a cough, "I shall presently recur."

"Poor Richard!" sighed Edith, partly to herself.

"You may well say 'poor Richard!'" returned Mrs. Atherton, drily, with a contemptuous stress upon the adjective. "It will be garrets and Glossop, and sixpence a page, for our fine gentleman Richard, as far as I can see. My maternal instinct always warned me against this young man. I call it shameful

that he should go about Blankshire paying attentions to young ladies under false colours."

"But Richard has always said that he was poor," interposed Edith, evidently much distressed at these announcements."

"Then why was he a guest at the Priory?" broke in Mrs. Atherton, red with passion. "Why was it 'my uncle's this,' and 'my uncle's that'? Why had he the use of a baronet's dogs, guns, and gamekeepers? Why ride a baronet's horses, and drive 'our uncle's' mail-phaetons? Why, when the heir is drowned, must he turn up, if he were not to succeed the drowner? Why did Mrs. Hammersley and all Blankshire say he was the heir? And let me tell you, Edith"—here the mother became very impressive—"that a few vague protestations of poverty from this equivocating young man were as nothing in the scale of my mind against such an array of contradicting facts."

"Well, Richard is poor, after all," concluded Edith, almost ready to cry.

"Poor as Job!" agreed Mrs. Atherton

rather coarsely; "and a precious knot our affairs are in. Here are you engaged to a fellow without a rap, who has come in between you and Mr. Ivory, the future possessor of Redburn."

"I will not marry Mr. Ivory if he owned fifty Redburns."

"Then pack up your things, and let us be off to Norfolk, Edith; I see no other solution," said the mother, at a loss.

"You were to tell me," persisted Edith, returning to her former question, "how Mr. Ivory got the right to Redburn. One does not pick up estates, like halfpennies, on the pavement."

"It will only set you more against him to learn the particulars," replied the widow, with evident reluctance. "It appears that Mr. Ivory's City business, which I supposed was docks, ships, shares, sugar, shirtings, or anything which one's friends' businesses in the City usually are, proves—ahem!—to be money-lending."

"I am not surprised," exclaimed her

daughter, with flashing eyes. "I was bullied just like a defaulting borrower, in the church last night. I quite take the 'note' of this fellow now."

"The story is brief and unpleasant," pursued her mother, avoiding Edith's eye. "But as you are sure to hear it elsewhere, you had better hear it now. Julian Leyland was in great distress, and pledged his rights as heir of Redburn to Mr. Ivory, for moneys, which were lent him. Julian, as I understand the story, was drowned without redeeming his pledge, and now Mr. Ivory holds his rights."

"It is worse than the *Merchant of Venice!*" cried Edith, with impatient disgust; "and, knowing this, you wish me to marry this wretch, mother? Is it possible you now advise me to take the reptile?"

"I cannot see my way," replied Mrs. Atherton, wiping her eyes. "Let us go to Norfolk, and allow things time to settle. I don't know what to say. No poor woman was ever so hampered and perplexed. It seems clear to my mind that you ought not to

marry Richard Leyland, for you are not at all the kind of girl suited for love in a garret; and again, now we know what Mr. Ivory is, I don't think my family would like your taking him, unless he were actually in possession of Redburn Priory."

"I see no 'unless' in the matter," said Edith, resolutely.

"Sir Sidney may live till ninety," pursued the elder lady, with a sigh of protest at such longevity; and, during his life, your position as Mrs. Ivory in Blankshire would be an unpleasant one. Lord Crowbury would not like being connected with a money-lender by blood, any the more from having been, I fear, connected with various money-lenders by bond."

"And I should not like it either," threw in Edith, with some sarcasm, "though, of course, my likings in the matter of my own marriage are as nothing to Lord Crowbury's preference. What have these Crowburys ever done for us, that we should defer to them in every action of our lives?"

"They have involved me in a very nasty dispute with Mrs. Hammersley," assented her mother, bitterly. "But never mind that now. We have graver vexations on hand. I merely quoted Lord Crowbury as representing the opinion of society at large. Now, I say, possession of Redburn would cover a multitude of sins; but, till he is in possession, I agree that Mr. Ivory is not an eligible suitor."

"Then let me write him his final dismissal at once," said Edith, seizing a pen.

"Let us wait at least till we are in Norfolk," counselled the widow, recurring to her chorus-like solvent for all perplexities. "Mr. Ivory is a violent man. Let him receive his quietus when we are out of reach of his temper."

"Then I will begin to pack up," assented her daughter, cheerfully.

"One moment," interposed the elder lady, producing a letter. "Richard Leyland still remains to be disposed of."

"Disposed of!" echoed her daughter, with a heaving bosom. "How heartless you are,

mamma! You dispose of my poor Richard as carelessly as if he were a bale of dry goods at an auction. Why should not he also wait till we are in Norfolk—that land where all riddles are answered?"

"Now be honest with me, Edith," said the mother, severely, "for you don't know how much depends on the sincerity of your reply. Knowing, as you know now, that Richard Leyland lives by his pen—'starves by it' would be the apter phrase; knowing, as you know now, that his uncle has nothing to leave him—are you, or are you not, prepared to become Richard Leyland's wife?"

"I like Richard very much," replied the daughter, with a tremor of the lip; "but I fear I have not force of character enough to face life on one or two hundreds a year. Still, I wish to take no irrevocable step until—Norfolk."

"Neither need you," said her mother, handing to her a written sheet of note-paper. "To save time, for you slept late, I have composed this letter. I believe it will do,

and you need only trouble yourself to transcribe it. It meets, I think, our present difficulty, explains your departure, and just tones down our friend Richard from the triumphant lover of yesterday; in case—from Norfolk—you wish to write more pointedly. Just run your eye over this."

"My dear Richard,

"We have been unexpectedly summoned to Norfolk by family affairs, and we shall be away visiting my widowed aunt in that county for at least a fortnight. I cannot say how sorry I am at being forced to leave Tamerton thus at a moment's notice. I long so much to see you before I start. But what can I do? I have neither time to arrange a meeting nor servants to send with a note. All the household is on its knees cording trunks in hot haste. In two hours our train leaves Stembury station.

"All this—in our position—is most galling and bitter. But poor mamma is dreadfully worried, and I must not add to her anxieties

more than I have done already, for my announcement to her yesterday of what you had said to me upset her a great deal. I never wish again to see her so angry as I saw her then. She insists that you and I, apart from each other, should think our engagement calmly and dispassionately over. She declares it is a very silly piece of work. What can I say? I wish you were here to reason with mamma. I try in vain to plead your cause, to take your part. I am very unhappy at going. We must trust each other, and hope for better days. What cold, commonplace comfort! Perhaps (who knows?) mamma may come to like you better by-and-by. I cannot get leave yet to correspond with you, so pray do not write to me—that would only involve me in much unpleasantness. If I can have this stern veto repealed, I will send you notice. Mamma is standing over me, and will not let me send you any love.

"Your affectionate

"EDITH."

After some faint demur, Edith consented to transcribe and adopt the above letter as an exponent of her then existing sentiments. She insisted, however, on interweaving several warmer expressions and kinder sentences than had stood in her mother's original draft. We have given the final and corrected version.

When we state that Mrs. Atherton was a woman of energy, we have merely repeated a foregone conclusion. She could have packed in four hours for Hong-Kong; consequently half that time sufficed for East Anglia. Mother and daughter, therefore, steamed out of Stembury station on that very afternoon; and what is perhaps more material to us, steamed, to all intents and purposes, out of our narrative.

The Tamerton coachman, who naturally drove the ladies to the train, received Edith's letter from the railway carriage window, with orders to effect its speedy transmission into the hands of Mr. Richard Leyland. This proved easy enough, as Richard, in person,

was overtaken by the empty and returning carriage, sauntering along the high road near Redburn. The letter therefore was then and there manually transferred to its destination. The coachman touched his hat, flicked his horses, and went on. The dust of his lessening wheels faded on the horizon. Richard knew that a letter so abnormally delivered, meant urgency and mischief of some kind. So, heaving a sigh by anticipation, he sat down at the road-side and perused Edith's despatch from beginning to end.

He jumped up in a pet at its conclusion, and continued his walk with swinging arms and a flushed face. The letter, in plain English, bore this purport to his mind: that Mrs. Atherton, as he of course anticipated, was dead against him; she was removing her daughter from his influence. Edith, he believed, was and would remain still loyal. This was, he told himself, a state of affairs sufficiently tantalizing. What action, at such a juncture, did it behove him to adopt?

Thus communing with his own fluctuating purposes, he came abreast of a narrow overarching green lane, which debouched upon the turnpike road at this point. Its solitude and cool, green shadows looked inviting in his fevered and anxious mood. He would penetrate to its quietest nook, and think Edith's letter reasonably over. Ought he to follow her to Norfolk, or ought he not? Mrs. Atherton forbade correspondence. Ought he to disobey her prohibition? He execrated the whole race of mothers, with their indiscreet, their prejudiced interferences; and then his mind reverted to Salvia Richmond, and how she had fared without a mother's supervision. So he knew not which case to prefer—a meddling mother, or none at all.

The lane contracted at this point so much that the hazels right and left brushed each of his arms and elbows. He heard some one approaching him ahead in the opposite direction. He merely thought that he and the oncomer would not have much room to pass

each other; and then he went back to his perplexities, and held steadily on.

"Nothing has prospered with me," ran the current of his thoughts, "since I came to Blankshire. I love one girl, and she proves worthless. I console myself with another, and her mother places me under an interdict. I seem to be the shuttlecock of fortune, beaten to and fro from disaster against disaster."

He had nearly run against the person meeting him, as a further illustration of the spite of fortune, when he checked himself just in time, and stopped dead short. The other person did the same.

Richard Leyland found himself face to face with Salvia Richmond.

It was hard to say which seemed most confused by the meeting. Both blushed up to their very eyes. Richard managed to find his voice first.

"Miss Richmond, I am very sorry to have blundered so inconsiderately into your way."

"Pray pass on, Mr. Leyland," said Salvia,

drawing to one side. "And I may thank you, as you pass, for this and all your previous consideration."

"You mean my letter and my conduct?" said Richard, holding back a bough.

"You are right. I mean both. Good morning." And Salvia went brushing on.

"One word, Miss Richmond."

Salvia paused. Her back was turned on him. No portion of her face was visible; but he saw that she was listening by her attitude.

"I am ready to give a full explanation," he said, in a low, but firm voice, "both of my letter and my conduct, if you desire it, and claim it at my hands."

Then Salvia turned herself half round. He could see the quivering shadow of her lip in profile against one of the broad bramble leaves. He heard a stalk of grass trembling behind, and just rustled by her hand. She flashed out upon him then queen-like, in her injury.

"I am proud in my way, Mr. Leyland,

though I am only a clergyman's daughter. I can respect myself, though, in your words, 'you could never ask your aunt to receive me.' I am too proud to accept any explanation from the lover of Miss Atherton. That fact is my explanation. I must pass on."

He was almost glad that he had roused her to indignation. How magnificent she looked! What splendid anger dilated her great, sorrowful eyes! What a different world it would have seemed to him had Salvia been as pure as Salvia now was beautiful! Was not this a poignant pathos, an agonizing wrong, in the blind scheme of things, that so stained a soul should inhabit a form so lovely? No idol, carved of the purest Parian rock, set up on high for adoration in some old shrine of Hellas, seemed worthier the censer and the knee than she did who then stood before him. Could this shining lily, meet for cloistered walks where only queens could come, be steeped and rooted in some putrid marsh which newts and toads infest? Could this faint rosebud

of sweetness ineffable, an angel's garden flower, have been flung in the reeking highways, and trampled by any peasant heel? An exquisite deception! a health-coloured leprosy! a death with ruddy cheeks! It was impossible! He could hardly look at her, and not believe her innocent. The enchantment of her beauty might even now prevail. He must beware. He must remind himself of her guilt continually, or he was lost. He must be stern, logical, abrupt with her. She had no right to adopt an injured tone with him. He would and must speak out. On her own head be the plain-speaking which she challenged.

"It is true, Miss Richmond, that I am the lover of Edith Atherton," returned Richard, picking the sepals off the hip of a wild rose one by one; "but why am I her lover? Because details have recently come to my knowledge connected with your past life. It seems that I am the last man in this prating parish to learn them; but I know them at last. Their knowledge has sent me in despair to Edith Atherton."

"Say rather, your fickleness has sent you thither," spake Salvia, seizing her advantage. "As to my poor life, you are welcome to all its homely incidents; which of these has disgusted the dignity of a Leyland? Is it some shift or stratagem of poverty? Some little harmless subterfuge of indigence? This prating village, as you call it, I have thus often and grievously offended. It seems I have outraged your gentility as well. It seems I am placed beyond the pale of Lady Leyland's recognition. Pray, let me know what I have done, that I may mend my manners!"

"You misunderstand me wilfully," he replied, stung to the quick by her ironies. "You know I mean nothing so trivial. Who am I, to cavil at poverty? I allude to a definite—a calamitous event. Curious eyes have watched you. Spiteful lips have whispered your secret. Accept my assurance, that I know all. You surely are satisfied at last? Do not pretend to think me fickle. Under such circumstances, only a hoodwinked

lover could be true. Tears cannot bring again the past. Let us shake hands and part. I know you lost your mother early. It is a great and an irreparable bereavement, for a girl with the dangerous dower of beauty, which you possess. I neither judge you nor condemn you, but you cannot be my wife. I make all allowance, but henceforth our paths are wide apart. Let us accept the inevitable without reproaches."

While he was uttering these sentences, Salvia had seemed to listen to him, as if she were in a dream. She had turned very pale, and stood with wide eyes and slightly parted lips. Wonder was in her face—the wonder of a person suddenly awakened to hear some strange announcement.

"I can make nothing of all this," she protested, pressing her forehead; "you speak as in a strange language. I catch a word here and there, but I cannot piece the sense and drift of your allusions. I feel faint. I seem to be half stifled. In mercy, explain yourself, and be quick about it. Tell me in

plain, honest English—of what I am accused?"

What an actress she would make! thought Richard, as he watched her. With what supreme art all this bewilderment and unconsciousness was counterfeited! She would faint presently: feign fainting to the life or rather to its death-likeness; then revive in a whirlwind of tears, a paroxysm of hysterics. A nice business he was in for! His usual luck! Well, she left him no choice. Come what might, he must have it out with her. "Of what are you accused?" echoed Richard.

"At once," said Salvia, vehemently.

"Please put out your left hand, Miss Richmond."

She extended it with wide eyes of amazement.

"Who gave you that garnet ring?"

"A German."

"By name, Pfleger, a music-master," supplied Richard, setting his teeth.

"You are right in both name and profession," replied Salvia; but she had need to

lean against a maple trunk for support, and a film began to gather on her sight.

"Has my English been plain enough yet?" demanded Richard, with a darkening brow.

"I have heard as yet no accusation," said Salvia, firmly but faintly.

"This is too much!" cried Richard. "I shall spare you no longer. Read this, Miss Richmond. I hate even now being compelled to confront you thus with your condemnation." So he produced the anonymous letter from his pocket-book, and placed it in her hands.

She straightened herself with a supreme effort; and, mastering her emotion, began to read.

Richard turned away with a sigh. He dared not watch her, as she read her own death warrant. That would have been too vindictive! Would she never have finished? The suspense was intolerable. One, two, three, and on to ten, he counted. Anything to fill the interval. What would she say next? Would she read for ages and ages?

She spoke at last. In calm and distinct accents, but it was not her own voice.

"All this is verbally true," she said, simply enough. Richard did not dare to look at her yet. Alas, alas! for the beautiful maiden! It was all true, all true then! "And yet," she went on with a grand, gathering scorn, "it is the foulest slander and the most lying calumny that ever the malevolence of one woman found heart to pen against her sister, since the beginning of the world." And she clashed the paper down and trampled upon it.

All the blood rushed from Richard Leyland's heart. He believed her partly now. Some dreadful mistake was about to be cleared up; or some inhuman treachery had been planned. Which would it be? The weight and agony of waiting to learn which form the monster that had come between them would assume, was very terrible. He adjured her—it was his turn now—he besought her to proceed.

"Listen!" she hurried on, with ineffable disdain; "listen, Mr. Leyland! you are generous

and a gentleman to believe such things as these! Six words will clear me from all this mire; and you, who have believed this voice in the darkness for some wise oracle of God, would not, forsooth, even ask me did I do thus? but passed your wise, merciful sentence, and then went to Tamerton—for consolation! Listen! six words will lift me from this slime in which your gracious thoughts contentedly have let me rest—me, whom you said you loved. Nay, by Heaven, it was idle saying when you said so! I will uncoil this adder link by link. I did go to the sea-side with Herr Pfleger and his wife, but I was at that time exactly eight years old. I did stay a week, and my father fetched me home in a hurry, because my mother was ill and nervous, and dreamed, during my absence, that I was drowned. We stayed at the little inn, and sailors certainly came there! and by this fact being set down I can pluck the mask from the face of my slanderer. Herr Pfleger did give me the garnet ring, as a remembrance of the visit. He was upwards of seventy, and

his wife was a few years his junior. How harmless, how weak looks this slain reptile now!—flaccid, uncoiled, thrown aside to rot upon its rubbish heap! And all this against me Richard Leyland has believed!" Her voice quivered as she ended. The accent of scorn faded into the tremor of reproach.

What answer should Richard give? He did a strange, odd thing by way of answer. He there and then flung himself upon the ground and wept like a child. Not heroic this, nor even very manly. Yet, all things considered, not altogether unnatural.

Salvia was disarmed in an instant, and not a little frightened. It was, indeed, an ugly sight to see a young fellow in the prime and strength of his manhood brought to such a pass. A piteous spectacle for any woman, feel she never so resentful.

"For God's sake, Mr. Leyland," she entreated, stooping over him, and even lightly touching his arm, "do not give way so. I forgive you—more than forgive you. I spoke bitterly just now. It is over. I never ex-

pected happiness. We are both too simple for this world of knaves. Like two foolish robins, the first winter trap has caught us."

"Who has done this?" cried Richard, hoarsely, starting to his feet. "Can anything in a human shape have guided the pen that wrote such diabolical perversions?"

"Hush, Richard!" said Salvia, resting her hand quite upon his arm. "It is only a silly, spiteful woman—a carrier of gossip from door to door. I told her daughter about an old sailor whom I used to talk to on my trip with Herr Pfleger. That fixes the letter upon her. She is the wife of a neighbouring clergyman—Mrs. Hammersley. The writing is not hers; that would be too simple, but she is answerable for every line."

"Then Mrs. Hammersley is the name of a scorpion!" groaned Richard, snapping a dry stick fiercely into fragments. "And if responsible for her actions, there is nothing excruciating in the whole martyrology which she does not deserve, to punish her for this fiendish malice. But the only time I saw

this person I took her for a mad woman. She must be insane. So little motive and such exquisite ingenuity of torment. For Heaven's sake let me pick up this letter. She must be confronted with it at once. I shall go, of course, to her husband."

"No use," said Salvia, moodily shaking her head. "Her husband is ruled with a rod of iron. She has worried him, poor man! into semi-idiocy. She is vicar, schoolmaster, emperor—everything in her parish. No, send her a lawyer's letter. The law is nearly the only thing in creation she is afraid of."

"I was thinking of Mr. Satchell, Sir Sidney's lawyer," hazarded Richard.

Salvia cordially concurred in his selection.

"And what can I say next?" proceeded Richard, in tones of piteous and agonized entreaty. "How can I ask your pardon for my infatuated credulity?"

"I say once more, I did not think you could have believed this of me," responded Salvia, with a gentle and reproachful dignity. "I fear that you cared about me very little,

that you knew me not at all, to heed these written infamies. The dreams of delirium, the vaunts of a drunkard, the drivel of an idiot; all these you might as reasonably have trusted against me as this!"

"Go on, Salvia, scathe me with your most just resentment. I have deserved it all."

"But since these things are so," Salvia went on, and her voice hardly faltered, "since you did not care much about me—and, God knows, who am I to inspire such love that treason cannot taint, and falsehood change it—it is wiser we should say betimes 'farewell.' Let us part kindly, forbearingly, with mutual forgiveness. I hope that you will be happy with Miss Atherton. She is very beautiful, she is wellborn, she is better suited to you in many ways; there can be no question of her reception at the Priory."

Richard had stood near, writhing and tossing about at her utterances. At this point he broke in, "Hold there! I can bear no more. Do not for pity go on. I wish you would trample me under your feet. I can

bear your reproaches; I cannot bear these kind, cruel words."

"Then there need be nothing more between us but 'good-bye,'" said Salvia.

"I don't wish to justify myself," resumed Richard, with an effort. "I have acted as inexcusably as a man could; and yet there are one or two little grains of palliation, which I should like you to know before that eternal silence after your farewell. I hear your sweet voice now. My God! and in five minutes' time I must be content never to hear it again!"

Here he paused, unable for the moment to proceed. Salvia stood above him, half turned away. Could that be a tear of Salvia's, which dropped on the wild rose leaf near his hand? He could not trust himself to look up. He continued—

"In two points I confirmed, or thought that I had confirmed, this wretched letter. You made me miserable one evening on Stonesdale Ridge, by telling me a German had given you your little ring, and having

tantalized me so far, no further would you tell me."

"I did not choose to be mistrusted," said Salvia, quickly. "'Twas but a light suspicion on which to judge me—my poor, flimsy ring! Was my truth nothing? was the love in my eyes nothing? was my heart, which spoke to you in broken utterances of emotion, nothing? were the days and evenings on Stonesdale Ridge nothing—when weighed against such a bauble?"

"Salvia, cease! you will break my heart," entreated Richard. "They say that the gods render those mad whom they mark for destruction. I was distraught; but let me finish—weak as it is—my defence. This second point was the poaching case. Of this I obtained ample confirmation from my uncle."

"A most harmless affair," explained Salvia, once more flushing with indignation. "See how the dead letter of truth is dragged captive behind the car of insidious falsehood. Here again we have complete verbal accuracy.

'Convicted!' Ah, there was certainly a conviction, a fine of five shillings, forsooth! 'Poaching!' That sounds ugly. Now hear what a childish business the so-called poaching was. My poor old German master took it into his head one morning to borrow the rusty flint gun with which our gardener used to protect the cherry trees. Thus armed, he sallied forth into what he called the 'forest,' on the analogy of his German towns, but this 'forest' happened to be Sir Sidney Leyland's park. In his own country there were no game laws, and of the strictness of that code, as administered upon the bench of Blankshire, he knew no more than a child unborn. The *naïveté* of his sporting proceedings proved his complete innocence. Under the very windows of Moorcock, the head-keeper's cottage, he deliberately, after a long aim, shot one sitting thrush. To his intense surprise, while he was reloading, Moorcock strode out and arrested him. My father endeavoured to intercede with Sir Sidney, but your uncle was inflexible and

furious. The foreigner's infantine simplicity was rated by the baronet as the more excessive impudence. The case came on at the petty sessions, and was so plainly trivial, that, had not Sir Sidney been present, it would have been dismissed. Your uncle could not actually sit upon his own case, but he came and stood over the sitting magistrates, and expressed his sentiments roundly. Even then they only inflicted a paltry fine. So much for your second point, Mr. Leyland."

"What a fool I have been, Miss Richmond!" was Richard's only possible comment, as he stood frowning and biting his lip. "What can I say? I am a doomed man. I must dree my own weird. I must tread alone in the Valley of Desolation. And now you want to go; alas! you want to go. I cannot say the last word. Give me two minutes more."

"No, I cannot wait," said Salvia, tremblingly. "Let us part, and not say the ugly word. Stay, I must tie my veil on before I go, because I shall have to pass through

the village, and because—— Well, never mind the reason. I have it in my pocket."

Salvia, with unsteady fingers, took out her veil. In drawing it forth a prayer-book fell on the ground at her feet. The volume lay open on the path for a second before Richard stooped to pick it up for her, and disclosed a little rudely painted rose in the blank leaf at the beginning.

"Let me restore your prayer-book," said Richard, who had held the book till the veil had been adjusted.

"I have been reading to old Mary Symonds," explained Salvia; "'tis not my usual prayer-book. I could not find my own, and in a hurry took out this. Odd that it should fall out here, just as we say—I mean don't say—good-bye."

"There is a pretty rose in it," observed Richard, aimlessly.

"You do not suspect me of more lovers now, Mr. Leyland?" said Salvia, with an indescribable pathos, that thrilled and cut him to the heart. "This is the rose of the dead;

I gathered it on the grey fatal downs of Stonesdale; a dead rose, a dead love, a dead life for ever and ever! The donor of this poor hectic blossom died before he gave it me. But he sent it to me, I know he did, for rescuing his pinched, calm face from the bleak mountain air, and getting him a warm resting-place under the holy daisies. You came to me on that first day where I had found him. In your eyes he seemed to live again. As I regard you now, that dead man's shadow lives in your whitening face. More than that, on this last day, which you will ever come to me, his book, his rose, falls at your very feet. I believe in fate. There is some bond between you. Take the prayer-book. I must give it you. Something within constrains me, and forces me to give it you. Do not vex me by refusing it. I shall not ask many more things of Richard Leyland. Save it, and do not throw it away, odd and shabby as it is. And now—it will soon be over!"

Richard took the prayer-book and placed

it reverently in his bosom. His heart was too full to speak. Salvia turned to go, but held out her hand behind. Richard kissed the small, white fingers fervently. Neither of them said a word. The leaves rustled around them. The light breeze came cool on their tearful cheeks. A bird sang as clearly as if there was no pain, no parting—nothing but love ineffable. Half the sun-disc rested on the last upland horizon field, where a wife came out to meet her husband returning from his work. Salvia shuddered and gave a sort of stifled cry, and began to move away. Slowly, slowly, never looking back, she passed out of his sight under the arching hazels of the lane. They had parted —for ever? And still the bird would sing.

CHAPTER V.

CATASTROPHE.

WHILE Salvia and Richard were taking such tragical leave among the overarching hazels of the little side lane, Sir Sidney Leyland had passed on the main road into which the lane ended. He was riding moodily homewards; and a stonebreaker, who knuckled his streaming forehead humbly to the great man as he went by, afterwards remembered that the squire had looked as black as thunder.

The cloud of anger, so obvious upon the brow of the horseman, had arisen in this wise. Sir Sidney received the London papers of the day at about three o'clock each afternoon, while digesting his luncheon. One item, however, of that morning's intelligence

had proved to the baronet of a most vexatious and indigestible character. The paragraph related to a police case arising from a disreputable row at an "ornate cottage" in St. John's Wood. And Sir Sidney shuddered to see that his own name had been mentioned during the proceedings. Now this was, he felt, very hard, for he had known nothing of the villa or its inmates for the last ten years; and that punishment, with its lame foot, should have taken a decade to catch him for a freak of his single life, was a little too bad. Besides, there had not been the smallest necessity to drag him into public notice. The reference to himself was merely one of those pieces of British toadyism, which is as rife in the "half world" as it is in the whole one.

So Sir Sidney, in his mood, wrote a letter; and, not caring for it to go through the Priory post-bag, which hung for general inspection in Logwood's pantry, the baronet rode towards Tamerton and posted his letter there quietly for himself.

He was, as we have explained already, in a vile humour, when, in Redburn High Street, he met Mr. Delvey Podge, who pressed himself upon the baronet's attention with his usual exuberant sham-heartiness. Podge had been itching to button-hole Sir Sidney for some days past; and the thick-headed dolt had not the tact to perceive that his neighbour was then in no humour to be pestered with questions. As an agreeable and tranquillizing topic, Podge blundered off at score on the subject—of all others—of Rupert Ivory. Half Blankshire, he told Sir Sidney, were pooh-poohing the new arrival, as a *parvenu*; half were upholding Ivory as emphatically of the right sort. Was Ivory really a millionaire? How was his wealth acquired? Sir Sidney maintained a diplomatic reserve, and allowed the fire of questions to exhaust themselves. He had a mere passing acquaintance with Mr. Ivory. He had formed no opinion, either in his favour or his disfavour. Ivory might be rich as Crœsus, or he might be poor as Job. Sir

Sidney was not interested in the subject, and would wish Mr. Podge good day. Thus, snubbed and repelled at all points, Podge became nettled and vicious. He was glad, he said, to hear Sir Sidney's disclaimer of all but the slightest knowledge of Ivory. For one or two rumours had made him, the blunt, frank Podge, really uncomfortable. Sir Sidney ought to know, that if Ivory did not say so himself, his friends were giving it out, far and wide in Blankshire, that Ivory held a thumping mortgage on the Priory estate. Might Podge now contradict this report directly from Sir Sidney's own lips?

The baronet felt his fingers itching to apply his hunting-whip across Mr. Podge's round shoulders, or upon Mr. Podge's fat, vapid face. But he repressed his boiling indignation, bowed blandly to the blinking, malevolent fool, and pursued his course without deigning him a syllable of reply.

So Sir Sidney resumed his homeward ride with one ominous hectic spot on either cheek; outwardly endeavouring to look calm, but

inwardly chafing and rankling under the sting of Mr. Podge's weak malice. Sir Sidney's hunter, a thoroughbred chestnut mare, was becoming fast unruly and as tempersome as her rider. She had her own Podges and annoyances, in the shape of certain squat brown horse-flies, not unlike that eminent justice of the peace, that hovered round her head, and kept stinging her almost into madness, and then darting away with a noisy, self-satisfied cheerfulness, as if they were the heartiest fellows in the world, and meant it all for the best. So the mare lost patience with her rider, and the rider had none left for his horse; so they both pursued their route on the worst of terms with each other. In a quarter of a mile, Sir Sidney overtook by the roadway side, an old female tramp, in the last stage of rags and destitution. She was bowed with years, and helped herself along with a kind of crutch. She wore a man's burst Hessian boot upon one foot, and a woman's trodden-down shoe upon the other. Stockings she

had none. The rest of her wardrobe was a shameful rotting heap of soot-coloured tags and tatters. She seemed to wear five or six garments, one over the other, but where one ended and the other began, in that amorphous chaos of raggedness and filth, it was impossible to say. A field scare-crow would have seemed clean and wholesome, as compared with this vagrant. She bore on her head a piece of flat inverted carpenter's basket, tied under the chin with a piece of twine. Her face was red and bloated, her eyes piercing, bright, and truculent; her hair, grey and matted, hung over her eyes like an untidily kept terrier's. In a word, a terrible, shameful degeneration of female humanity.

She made no obeisance to Sir Sidney, after the manner of the Blankshire poor. She did not prostrate her old miserable self, as his own special paupers used, who hoped for wedges of beef at Christmas. She stared curiously at first, fixedly next, and at last defiantly at the horseman. Thought Sir

Sidney, "This waif has no Blankshire settlement; we teach our poor in Blankshire better manners." And yet a strange, uncomfortable thrill of dawning recognition went through him, as he glanced at her again—some weird association, with something first pleasant, and then deathlike. Sir Sidney shuddered, and meant to look at her no more. He pressed his heel to his horse, and made it step out.

To his dismay, the beldam broke also into a kind of shambling trot, jerking herself along with her stick's aid, used in a kind of leaping-pole fashion, in a way both ludicrous and pitiable.

"Sir Sidney Leyland, Sir Sidney Leyland!" she croaked out after him; "the handsomest gentleman in Blankshire! we have not met for a mort of years. Fling me a guinea in my rags, for the old times, and for the sake of old acquaintance! Toss the old mother a bit of gold, for the sake of my pretty Alice, dead and gone—ay, dead and gone, Sir Sidney!"

She ended in a sort of howl, half grief and half entreaty, and began to beat her withered breast with her disengaged hand. He knew her now. What strange doom of retribution had suddenly environed him? Why should another terrible spectre rise at his elbow on that day? Why should the pleasant vices of his youth, so long and quietly encharnelled, burst their cerements all at once, and come to shame him and disgrace him, when he was living a fair, smooth life, a comfortable life, reverenced and respected?

He flung her the gold, as the readiest way to be rid of her. She clutched it as a starving beast snaps at flesh, and brought it against her ghastly mouth and cheek, and mumbled over it in a sort of half-drunken childishness. She caressed it as if it were some fair child, and fawned over it and hugged it. Avarice aping the gesture of immortal love! A fearful parody!

Then the instinct of greed awoke, and she shrieked huskily after him. "Another, for old acquaintance! another, my handsome gentleman!"

Acquaintance with that heap of shreds and carrion? He, with whom the bishop of the diocese took counsel? He, to whom the lord-lieutenant was obsequious? He, Leyland of Redburn, acquainted with *that?* The inbred arrogance of his race grew strong within him. "Martha Bulmer," said he, emphasizing the words with his whip, "dare to beg of me again, and I will commit you as a vagabond!"

"Is that your welcome to an old friend?" growled Mrs. Bulmer, passing from adulation to menace. "You are very ready with your law. You are a judge here, they tell me. There are laws enough to catch me. I have been in gaol a dozen times over. I like it, for a change—all but the want of drink. There are no laws to catch you, squire and judge of the poor, at least on this side of the churchyard."

"You were always a hardfaced jade," replied Sir Sidney, with a darkening face; "and you let your tongue wag, because you know your daughter's memory protects you from my resentment."

"You were mighty tender of her memory!" panted the old woman, shaking her withered hand up at the rider. "What did you put up to the memory of Alice Bulmer? You would have buried a favourite horse better, and one of your hunting dogs as well. Her memory, indeed! By the Lord! *your* memory is a short one."

"Remember that I was away in London when your daughter died." Sir Sidney advanced this remark, with almost a shadow of apology in his tone. The great Blankshire baronet apologizing to a scare-crow! What would come next?

Shuffling and shambling, and now breaking into maudlin sobs, the old woman kept trotting abreast of the chestnut's glossy shoulder. One felt inclined to laugh outright at her one moment, and to weep outright at her another. "There was not such a rosebud as my Alice," whimpered the old woman—"not in fifty parishes round Redburn. She might have had any of our young farmers whom she had chosen to look at, in wedlock—honourable.

But she was noticed by the great gentleman. What farmer, what cottager, dared to court her then? She was to be a lady, poor fool! and go up to London and ride in her own carriage! And you told her what you chose, with your handsome, lying face, until—— I wish the snakes and adders had eaten her beauty before the day when that wounded partridge of yours fell in our apple croft, where she was hanging out the clothes in her little apron and her lavender print dress. She was only a cottager's daughter, just sixteen, a schoolgirl, a poor, silly thing. She had hardly been a mile from her cottage door. What chance had she with the fine gentleman, clever in all the wickedness of London?"

"Well, you made your harvest, beldam," said Sir Sidney, coarsely. "I was handsomely plundered by the rapacity of yourself and all her kith and kin. Father, brother, and your present scandalized self—you all came on me right merrily while my infatuation lasted. You made your golden hay then, so spare me this moral lecture now."

"Much good your money did us!" ejaculated Mrs. Bulmer, wagging her head like some Japanese monster in earthenware. "It took us from field work, and then the devil of drink got hold of us all. My old man died mad with drink; my boy 'listed, and went over the seas through drink. I wish the drink would kill me, but it can't. My mouth is full of fire, and it goes on craving and gnawing for ever. I thirst even in my sleep, and the devil sends me dreams of beer-vats and gin-barrels. You twit me with living on the girl's disgrace. I know I did it; I know I was an ill mother—that I deserved a rope round my neck; I used her shameful; I was nearly as bad as you!"

The old hag jerked out the last sentence with an emphasis and an irony, in which the grotesque actually passed into the terrific. Fancy this courtly gentleman, elaborated to a finger's nail in toilet and manners, being "nearly as bad" as this pitiful, ambling Jack-in-the-green of tatters!

"She died of the child," sobbed old Martha,

mopping her eyes with the tags of her dung-hill shawl. "She went to the ground with a pauper funeral. My pretty, my pretty! I see the soft brown hair, even now! Me and the overseer went with her. Father was drunk that day. He was never sober then. Six deal boards nailed together round my sweet; and yet not a queen looked rosier in her grand silken shroud than my darling did in her parish coffin."

Sir Sidney checked his horse to a slower pace, and looked down fixedly upon the turn-pike road. "I tell you I was away," he persisted, with certain remorseful workings of his lip.

"But when you did come back," shouted the old dame, fiercely, "to your sporting and your hunting, your fine place and your gay companions, had you one thought in your pleasures for the poor thing under the turf? You might have put up a bit of stone over her. You could, at least, have bought the grave, and saved her bones their rest. The grave has been used again and again since

then. You could have come and seen me, and told me you were sorry."

"My doing any of these things," said the baronet, coldly, "would have created talk and scandal in the parish."

"Hear him!" exclaimed Mrs. Bulmer, to the hedge and chestnut horse generally. "My poor flower was in her pauper grave through him, and through his notice; and my great gentleman's name was too holy and too good to be mixed with hers, even after death."

"Mrs. Bulmer, you are going even beyond the limits of even my great forbearance!" hissed the baronet, laying his hunting-whip in a meaning manner against his mare's shoulder.

"You need not take your dog-whip to me!" said the miserable creature, cowering as she read the import of his gesture, and then blazing up fiercer than before. "My tale is done; my breath is gone. I am too old to scamper at the heels of your beast, and rate you as you ride. You know the child lived.

I broke up my home; I took the boy to the workhouse; I went upon the tramp; I came back years after; I saw him in his little grey cap and suit, hoeing in the workhouse fields with a gang of other boys. They were being watched at work, like black slaves or convicts. I hear that he ran away. Where is he now? Hung, for all I know."

"I am sorry to learn this," said Sir Sidney, grimly propitiative. "If you had applied quietly, and in a respectful manner, I would have done everything reasonable for the child."

"Respect to you!" shrieked the old heap of rags, with a hideous laugh. "You must go for respect to those who know you less than I do. I swore that the boy should never take bite nor sup at your hand. I cursed you, Sir Sidney; I cursed you on the night I left my home, on the night I left the boy at the workhouse gates."

"Very considerate of you, I am sure!" observed Sir Sidney, in savage irony. "Now, here is my lodge, Mrs. Bulmer, so be off!"

Old Martha stood in the road before the two great stone merlins. She raised both her lean arms above her head; and, as the baronet passed into his park, she waved them after him, crying, "Ay, I cursed you then, and I curse you now. You will shake me off at your park gates, but you will carry my curse in along with you. May no child of yours ever come after you at the Priory, for the sake of that workhouse child! May your fine lady wife—married, they tell me, for money—deceive you as you deceived my Alice!"

The last random arrow seemed to strike home. He glanced back fiercely. Martha Bulmer had left the road, and sat, wildly sobbing and rocking herself to and fro, in the ditch. History repeats itself. The scrivener's widow had sat there before her.

So, with the old crone's parting malediction still ringing in his ears, he passed gloomily through his lodge gates. At another time, and under other circumstances, such a rencounter as this would have caused him only

a momentary twinge; but to-day, somehow, he grew more and more despondent. This was with him a most unusual frame of mind. He had lived his life gaily and carelessly. He had drunk the cup of pleasure to its lees; and he had seldom been troubled with that remorse and half-heartedness which spoils so much of what his order called enjoyment. He had been blessed with an excellent constitution, and a most sanguine and elastic temperament. He had paid none of the physical penalties which had killed off or crippled his contemporaries, who had lived no whit worse than he had. No excess seemed to harm Sir Sidney. He would have sat light-hearted on the edge of an earthquake which had just swallowed up half his most intimate friends; and he would, after the catastrophe, have dined off three courses with good appetite. The man was eupeptic in body; and, if the expression be allowed, eupeptic in mind. Disease would not cling to him; grief would not remain with him. His robust health, mental and bodily, shook them both off.

So with external annoyances: no one had been in more scrapes in his time; and yet no one had got out of so much dirty water with so few manifest stains and so little blatant scandal. Sir Sidney had been emphatically what is called a lucky man; this luck had never yet failed him at the worst of pinches. He believed in his right to be prosperous; and he believed most overweeningly in himself. Unscrupulous, overbearing, a formalist, a selfish, shallow man, of only average abilities, he dominated his fellows by his good looks and high birth; he had bullied and had his way, consumed the fat of the land, and met with no serious check or calamity. He had lived, considering all the money he had squandered and all the tricks he had played with himself, a singularly happy and prosperous life.

Now he was growing old, and he meant to reform. His declining years should be respectable. He would cultivate the domestic virtues. He would become an attentive and devoted husband. He would patronize the

church, and affect the society of the clergy. He would live for his dinner and the good opinion of the world. But somehow, since he had grown steady, his "luck" had seemed to be on tip-toe for a flight. He had lately received a shrewd hint or two from Dame Fortune that he was vulnerable as well as his neighbours. "Fortune favours the audacious," runs the old adage, and since he ceased to be audacious, Fortune had begun to regard him coldly and even scornfully.

To Sir Sidney, in his maturer age, his position was everything. Like all shallow men, he keenly relished the observance of his inferiors, and exacted their ceremonious deference to the last scruple that he could claim as Leyland of Redburn. Consequently, the settlement of Ivory at Tamerton had been really a shrewd blow to him, aimed at the very citadel of his self-importance. And, to-day, he had learnt that this insolent money-lender had forfeited his pledge of secrecy, and was beginning to blab his claim upon Redburn. And every pelting squireen and paltry

justice of the peace might insult Sir Sidney now with officious condolences. Another vexation—What had been the matter with his wife during the last two days? Was woman ever so changed, so unaccountable? Like all elderly rakes, Sir Sidney required a most scrupulous accuracy of conduct from his own wife; though he did not see that the moral standard need be so high among the wives of his neighbours. Cæsar's wife would have had an easier time of it than Sir Sidney's in these respects. Why need old Martha Bulmer have harped on that chord? In short, Sir Sidney, riding along, saw ahead above the sunken sun a long blue-black ridge of impending thundercloud; and Sir Sidney saw that same cloud reflected in the mirror of his soul. On all sides his out-look seemed hopeless, and he became convinced that his luck had turned; and when a man of his temperament can bring himself to think so, depend upon it, he is nearly at the end of his tether.

Sir Sidney's luck *did* practically end, there and then, at one of his finest cedars. A huge

bough, a fair-sized tree in itself, had been torn off by the wind during the night. Sir Sidney left the carriage drive, and turned his horse across the turf to inspect the extent of the damage. The evening was growing dusk. The sun had set half an hour. The wind had sunk with the sun. Not a breath stirred. The storm was globing itself up in lurid cloud-banks. An oppressive sense of coming thunder hushed the woods and the birds. Sir Sidney rode up to the prostrate bough, and drew rein, still mounted, behind it. Even lying flat-wise on the ground, the foliage rose to the rider's chin, and almost masked both horse and horseman. It had been a grand limb on, perhaps, his most lordly tree. Another vexation! He then rose in his stirrups, and peered across the branch towards a dead Scotch fir, and a deserted ling hut, some two hundred and fifty yards ahead. Nothing to be seen; yet he fancied that in the still air he had heard voices in that direction. Sir Sidney raised his bridle-hand to go. On second thoughts, he would not

turn his horse, until he had lit a fresh cigar. While he lit it, the voices came again. Again he stood up in his stirrups, and glanced towards the ling hut. This time he rubbed his eyes fiercely; and his face became sharp and pale as a dead man's. What ghost does he see in the gloaming — what hideous phantom—that he hardly breathes through his livid, just parted lips? Out of the hut has emerged—his wife! She has come out alone at first, but now, in a second of time, a strange, ill-dressed man has sauntered out beside her. Now they stand close together, in eager and earnest converse. Presently, both figures have disappeared into the wood, at whose edge the hut is reared. An interval passes. Then the man re-emerges from the wood—alone. Now he stands at the ling hut door. His hands are in his pockets. He is whistling.

Sir Sidney had watched it all, hardly daring to breathe. Now he shook himself, and clenched his hunting-whip fiercely. The scowl of Sir Raymond in the picture flared

out upon his brow. This was the crowning blow. All the pent-up vexations of the day culminated in that sight. All things in the world faded from his mind, save a thirst for immediate vengeance. He put his mare into a hand gallop, and went straight at the man, to ride him down. He came so swiftly and quietly across the turf, that the first intimation the stranger had of his approach was a stunning blow on the head from the butt end of Sir Sidney's bone-handled whip. Luckily for the stranger, the stiff brim of his felt hat broke the force of the cut; and, though he reeled, he was able to recover his balance. On steadying himself, he found that Sir Sidney had wheeled his mare round, and was coming at him again; this time with the long pendant thong, the end of which trailed on the turf at his horse's hoofs. The stranger watched for the raising of Sir Sidney's arm to give the cut; then, quick as lightning, he sprang at the upheld wrist, and wrenched the whip at last from the grasp of the rider. While they struggled for

its possession, the mare reared bolt upright, lifting the stranger, who clung to the whip-handle, off his legs, and nearly falling over backwards on both him and Sir Sidney. When the stranger had wrenched away the whip, he dropped down upon the turf; and the mare, relieved of his extra weight, righted herself. Then the man's first use of his newly acquired weapon was to strike the horse a tremendous blow with it across her flank. At this, she reared again furiously; and, becoming utterly uncontrollable, she plunged in among the low-hanging boughs of the wood adjoining; and against one of these she swept off her rider with a sickening crash to the earth.

The stranger's first impulse seemed to be a vindictive one, for he flourished the whip and moved a step or two towards the prostrate baronet. His second impulse seemed one of self-preservation, for he wavered, flung down the whip, took to his heels, and was lost in the wood.

Apparently David Rattenworth, the game-

keeper, had seen the struggle from a distance, for he now came running up, greatly out of breath, to the side of the fallen and motionless Sir Sidney. He found the baronet lying on his back, perfectly insensible, with a fearful gash from the bough across his right temple. The mare had got fast by her bridle in a pine branch, and was wounding herself by plunging and kicking in the dense underwood, fifty yards off. Rattenworth's whistle brought up more assistance in a few moments, for all the staff of keepers were about, seeing the cock pheasants up to roost. Four of the band bore Sir Sidney up to the hall on a hurdle. Young Tom Moorcock scoured off to the village for Dr. Ricketts. The rest, headed by Rattenworth, plunged into the wood in pursuit of the baronet's assailant, whom they of course instinctively set down as a poacher. Their chase was soon crowned with success. The heart of the park wood consisted of a "moss" or morass, the outskirts of which were covered with a treacherous summer vegetation; which seemed, to every eye but a

countryman's, to afford a perfectly solid footing. The stranger, in his eagerness to escape, had tilted head first into this quagmire. Herein he had stuck fast, like a fly in a pot of treacle. Self-extrication he found impossible. If he pulled out one leg, the other only sank in deeper. The timely advent of his pursuers alone preserved him from the ugly death of gradual suffocation. They hauled him out to *terra firma* roughly enough, and corded his hands behind his back with their handkerchiefs and braces. Next they had perforce to scrape off him the thick glutinous bog-mire with their clasp-knives. Last they marched him off to Moorcock, the head-keeper's cottage. Hence, as bad accounts of Sir Sidney's state arrived, he was placed in a gig to be consigned to the lock-up at Stembury. Rattenworth drove, and the stranger sat between him and Bridle, the rural policeman, who had at last been found. Various volunteers followed the gig on foot, for the news had got wind and the village was in an uproar.

As to the unconscious Sir Sidney, they bore him in to the great mansion of which he was master and lord. Servants stood around, his wife leant weeping over him. But he moved not, spake not, knew nobody. Dr. Ricketts, after making his inspection, merely shook his head and sent off a galloping groom for another doctor from Stembury. He also telegraphed for a great physician to come down instantly from London.

The Stembury doctor did arrive in time, but he only helped Ricketts in shaking his head and looking blank. The London physician got as far at Quatre Bras station, but received on the platform a second telegram, saying that Sir Sidney Leyland had passed beyond the reach of his skill. The baronet never recovered consciousness, and only lived six hours after his accident.

The sagacious reader has, of course, recognized in Sir Sidney's assailant our old friend Gilbert Archer.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MISSING LINK.

On the morning succeeding the fatal affray in Redburn Park, Gilbert Archer was brought up for examination at the Stembury court-house. Mr. Delvey Podge occupied the chair, as presiding magistrate, and he was supported by Thistleton Shorthorn, Esq., another, though less eminent, member of the Blankshire bench.

Inasmuch as popular rumour had magnified the tragedy into a wilful and long premeditated murder, and in consequence of the exalted social position of the victim, the court-house was densely crowded long before the accused had been conveyed thither from the Stembury lock-up. Indeed, many of the quality and fashion of the neighbourhood had already

been accommodated with seats on the bench, by ten o'clock, the hour appointed for the proceedings to commence. Among the *élite* were noticeable—Captain Charles Mayne, late of the second regiment of Blankshire militia, at anchor behind his eye-glass, with pendulous whiskers, and a recurrent twitch in the frontal muscles of his good-natured, puzzled face. There was Matilda Whiffle, dressed tighter than ever, with a roseate tinge, rather unequally distributed on each of her youthful cheeks, and a flowing ringlet depending from under her Gainsborough hat. There were the two hatchet-faced Misses Podge, who seemed like the old-fashioned *silhouette* likenesses of young ladies; or as if they might be the two queens of spades and diamonds out of a pack of cards. Away from the bench, to which her status hardly entitled her, Mrs. Hammersley sat swelling in the jury-box, which would not be used to-day. She had a keen eye for the proceedings, and consumed lozenges at intervals from a hand-bag. Her bonnet was, botanically speaking,

as various and interesting as ever. Richard Leyland was also present.

Between the bench and the square pew-like dock, intervened a kind of well for the attorneys and the bar, when there were any. Beyond and behind the dock, the rest of the court was railed off and allotted to the public. This space was thickly packed with the unwashed, who, pending the arrival of the prisoner, were impatient with their feet, and obstreperous with their comments. Some cracked nuts, some sucked oranges; into the extreme background had crept, with his basket, a vendor of ginger beer, who, to judge by the repeated "pops," did a brisk trade, until Podge with eagle eye detected and extruded him.

Presently, like the wind athwart a field of corn, a whisper ran across the court of "he's a-coming," all the bobbing heads and pushing elbows calming thereupon into a stillness of expectation. Outside the court-house, in the streets of Stembury, the regular tramp of the police escort was plainly audible; the hooting of the bystanders, as the prisoner

passed, intermittently rising, like a high wind in a chimney, and dying away again.

At this critical moment, the court usher laid upon the towering desk of justice, behind which Mr. Podge sat in magisterial awe and magnificence, a glazed visiting card, engraved —"Mr. Rupert Ivory, Tamerton Cottage." The attendant proceeded to explain that the superinscribed owner was uncomfortable where he was; was keenly interested in the morning's proceedings; and wishful, could it be permitted, for a seat upon the bench. Mr. Delvey Podge had heard quite enough in the way of county rumours to decide that Ivory was a personage to be civil to. So, after reading the name, the chairman looked up; and soon made out Ivory right in front of him in the public portion of the court. The money-lender had hardly misdescribed himself as ill at ease. Upon one arrow-headed rail of demarcation rested his chin; his two hands grasped the two next railings. The populace was billowing and surging against

him from behind. To these bars Ivory clung to prevent himself being swept away into the tide of humanity, which rearwards broke upon him. Podge soon caught the eye of this shipwrecked mariner, across the intervening gulf of heads between them; and then Podge nodded, and indicated a chair, empty, but partially veiled by Miss Whiffle's flounces. So the usher was despatched to extricate Ivory from the billows of the residuum, and to bring him up in glory to the judgment-seat of Blankshire. This, alas! he was never destined to reach. The usher disappeared to find him, and at that instant the prisoner was brought into court. Mr. Delvey Podge had thereupon plenty to absorb his entire attention, and the whereabouts of Ivory passed clean out of his mind. It was not till a much later stage in the proceedings that the chairman noticed, that no Ivory had come to nestle near the expanded flounces of Matilda; and then the usher told him that the gentleman had been taken very unwell, and had abruptly quitted the court. This

incident, however, we mention out of its appropriate order.

The usual buzz and bending forward of heads greeted the appearance of Archer in the dock. All eyes were instantly bent upon the protagonist in the tragedy of the day before. Our old friend certainly looked a personage of truculent, not to say homicidal, proclivities. He naturally wore the clothes in which he had been captured. The peat stains, derived from his immersion in the park wood morass, greatly deteriorated his general appearance. Upon his trowsers and upon his coat the orange chalybeate mud had by this time dried into a reddish dust. He resembled, indeed, an Ealing brickmaker after a very hard and a very wet day's work.

Mr. Leatherskin, attorney, of Stembury, appeared for the prosecution. Mr. Satchell had telegraphed to say, that he would arrive before the close of the proceedings. The prisoner was on this occasion undefended.

"Silence!" shouted the usher. "Silence in the court!"

Silence having been proclaimed, Mr. Delvey Podge proceeded with great deliberation to mend his pen. The captious may demand, why Mr. Podge had not done this before? Justice elected to mend its recording pen *then*, and that was enough. Lesser minds might feel agitated and nervous; but, if any one thought the chairman was going to hurry himself, they would be disappointed. It was a fine sight. A hundred anxious eyes watched the process. Hardly a breath was drawn, as the nib was finished across the judicial thumbnail. Assembled Blankshire felt at this moment that she had indeed a magistrate!

Then Mr. Podge made a dive with his virgin pen into a gigantic inkstand reared before him. That inkstand was in itself a tremendous implement of justice. It had struck terror into the soul of many a brow-beaten witness. The felon's heart sank within him at its dimensions. Its capacities of accusation seemed unfathomable.

At length Mr. Podge cleared his throat.

"Ahem! So the prisoner will give neither name nor address?"

Mr. Leatherskin stretched out of his well and whispered to Mr. Superintendent Picker, who craned downwards towards the attorney from a little truncated sentry-box, which he sat in at the prisoner's right. Picker was a tall man with a very small voice, a bald head, and very bushy black eyebrows.

"That is correct, sir," said Leatherskin, answering Podge's query with a professional bow towards the judgment-seat. "I regret to say that the accused from his first capture has maintained an obdurate silence."

Miss Whiffle tittered into Charlie Mayne's ear that the prisoner's name must be Palmer or Greenacre.

Mayne rejoined that no one who saw the accused could wonder he had done for the baronet.

"So be it," said Podge, noting the circumstance. "We shall get a label for him presently."

"Any name which you twist out of me

now," said the prisoner, striking in at this point, "is not likely to be the correct one; so I prefer giving no name at all. I don't see why I should furnish information against myself."

"Guilty or not guilty?"

The prisoner was emphatically not guilty.

"Call the first witness," said Podge, turning back his wristbands with an almost pugilistic air.

This was James Rattenworth, underkeeper to the late Sir Sidney Leyland, who deposed that at seven o'clock on the previous evening he had been going round the edges of the different game-coverts in Redburn Park to see the cock pheasants up to roost for the night. His attention had been arrested by two figures near the ling hut, about a furlong in front of him.

By the Court:—Ling was heather dried with the bloom on it; used to thatch summer-houses and such like. The ling hut was not inhabited. It had never been inhabited, to his knowledge. Well, they might inhabit

it; but the earwigs, woodlice, and such like, would be against them. The hut was only used to watch from on cold nights for wood-pigeons, poachers, and such like. It was very small. He declined, for fear of perjury, to specify the size to an inch. One could not swing a cat in it. (Laughter.)

Examination resumed:—One figure was that of a female, the other was the prisoner. He did not recognize the female, not to swear to her. She had seemed to him stylish. The two were talking earnestly, and then they passed into the wood together. The hut was at the fringe of the covert. Presently, the accused came back alone, and stood much where he had stood previously. He was whistling "Tommy, make room." Witness was then for the first time aware of Sir Sidney. He was cantering at a brisk pace right down upon the prisoner, who apparently did not see him coming. On reaching the prisoner, Sir Sidney raised his hunting-whip and struck at him. Prisoner seemed to reel like, but did not fall. They then closed and

struggled. Prisoner must have pulled away the whip from Sir Sidney; for, when they unloosed, prisoner had got it in his hand. Witness next saw prisoner hit the horse with the whip. The mare plunged, seemed to get beyond her rider's control, and dashed away in under the trees furiously. Witness saw Sir Sidney come in contact with a low-hanging bough which swept him out of his saddle. He seemed to fall to the earth very heavily. Prisoner then ran away, and appeared to limp a little. Witness then got up to his master's side as fast as his legs could carry him. He found Sir Sidney lying on his back quite insensible, and bleeding from a wound at the side of his forehead. Other keepers soon came up. Witness afterwards helped to pursue prisoner and to capture him in the peat wood bog, into which he had got fast in his hurry to escape. The prisoner had no gun or weapon of any kind. He threw down Sir Sidney's hunting-whip when he made off.

Cross-examined by the prisoner:—Witness could not swear of his own knowledge, who

the female was. He was told her name that morning by the butler, Mr. Logwood. Witness had been under a wrong impression about her at first, but had kept his impression to himself. She was well dressed, and walked with an air, not like the village women. Witness believed that Sir Sidney struck the first blow. He did not think that the last blow given by the prisoner had touched Sir Sidney, it fell upon the horse's flank with a sounding flop; if it touched Sir Sidney at all, it would have fallen about on his knee. It certainly could not have reached his head.

The prisoner here stated that Rattenworth had given his evidence with perfect fairness.

The next witness was Lavinia Brimley, lady's maid to Lady Leyland, who said that about half-past six on the previous evening she had met the prisoner by appointment at the ling hut. (Here the prisoner looked greatly astonished, and the witness began to cry.) She knew next to nothing about the accused. Their acquaintance was only a few

days old. She had met him promiscuous like one evening at dusk in Redburn High Street. He had paid her several compliments, and he had seemed to speak better than his clothes. She had met him subsequently several times as a sweetheart. He had given her—ahem—the name of Briggs, and she had hoped she might have got herself a husband (renewed emotion on the part of witness), as they were very scarce. (Laughter.) Witness knew now that she had acted imprudently; but she had never supposed prisoner capable of striking at a baronet; she certainly would not have consented to meet Mr. Briggs if she had.

By the Court:—She could not say why Sir Sidney had ridden so roughly at the prisoner. She supposed her master was put out at her for bringing followers into his park. Sir Sidney was a bad-tempered man at home at all times, but he was very smooth and sweet in company. Her master was never partial to followers, even in London. On one occasion he had dismissed a housemaid, because

her cousin came down the area in the uniform of the Surrey militia.

On being asked if he had any questions to put to this witness, the prisoner appeared to waver and became somewhat disturbed. After muttering to himself, however, for some moments, he said he should ask the jade nothing.

Captain Mayne, in a stage whisper, opined to his fair neighbour that Brimley was a "dayvelish elegant gurl." Matilda Whiffle had thought Mr. Rattenworth a very fine man, something, in fact, between a gipsy and a corsair. Mayne, who would about reach to the gamekeeper's shoulder, differed in thinking him a coarse-looking fellow. Mayne had a low opinion of both tinkers and smugglers.

"What indecent haste these girls of the lower orders show in getting themselves husbands!" sighed Matilda, in plaintive accents.

"By Gaud! they do," agreed the captain languidly; adding as a happy afterthought, "but, upon my honour, it's better a gurl

should be too quick about getting married than too slow."

"Stuff and nonsense!" repudiated Matilda, with a toss of her Gainsborough hat, and a viper-like undulation of its dependent ringlet.

The captain saw he had put his foot in it, and retreated behind the glassy outwork of his eye-glass, convulsing in his retreat the muscles of his cheek and eyebrow. "I was talking of *gurls*, you know," he floundered, making things infinitely worse. "Green, young, fresh things of under thirty."

"You had better not talk at all," suggested Matilda, with bland asperity, "for you are interrupting the proceedings and making the usher look our way. Let us listen to Dr. Ricketts."

Herbert Ricketts, Esq., M.R.C.S., came next, and told the Court that he was a general practitioner, and lived at Redburn. He had attended the late Sir Sidney, his family, and household, for many years. (Here followed a good deal of immaterial evidence.) Sir Sidney died from the wound received upon

his right temple. This injury had resulted clearly from the bough of some tree, inasmuch as witness had found various fragments of bark, both in the wound and in the hair adjoining it. There were no other injuries, except a slight abrasion on the right knee, which might or might not have been caused by a hunting-whip. Sir Sidney was a man of a very strong constitution. He never had anything the matter with him. He could not call Sir Sidney a temperate man in any respect. Sir Sidney never recovered even a gleam of consciousness. Witness had seen the case was hopeless from the first.

Jack Limebeer was the ostler and "boots" at the Merlin, in Redburn. Was his name John? That he could not swear to. He had never been called anything but Jack. Witness would swear no one had ever called him John in his hearing and to his knowledge. He didn't know nothing about his baptism or his "stiffycuts." He had no recollection of either. He was more of an ostler than a "boots," because they put up more horses than

travellers. He had rubbed down their "cheerman's" 'ors before now, and was glad to see him looking so well and hearty. (Knuckling his forehead.) Was he going to keep them there all day? No, he was not. There were three 'orses at the Merlin to be rubbed down, and he wished to be home as much as any of them. Witness had noticed the prisoner several times lurching and lounging about in the village between the lights. On one occasion he had seen prisoner in Redburn churchyard. Could not say what he wanted there. Once prisoner came into the Merlin tap. Witness had passed a few remarks with him. Prisoner had asked whether the public were allowed to walk in the Priory Park? Witness told him no. Prisoner also inquired if Sir Sidney was much liked? Witness told him no.

"And why not, sir?" demanded the chairman, sternly.

Witness supposed he ought to repeat the truth, as he said it then. The villagers did not like Sir Sidney. There had been one old

woman in their place—she was on the drink—going on against Sir Sidney, fearful. They called her Martha Bulmer.

"Every one knows that story," shrilled a metallic voice from the jury-box.

"If that person," fumed the chairman, turning a stony glance on Mrs. Hammersley, beneath which even that intrepid freebooter quailed, "again interrupts the Court, I shall direct the usher to remove her. She is liable to committal for contempt; she is not before the Court. She has no *locus standi.* As for you, Jack or John Limebeer, your evidence is inadmissible and most irregular. It is an insult to the dignity of the bench for us to be told of the ramblings of an old woman in her cups——"

"She were taking it in the pewter," witness corrected, submissively.

"Whatever she said, it was not evidence," snorted Mr. Delvey Podge, "and I should advise you, Limebeer, to learn to speak well of those who are placed over you. It is a pity you were ever called."

"So my landlady said," agreed the ostler, coolly. "But Bridle, our constable, he would have me."

"You can retire, sir," said Podge, airily waving him a dismissal. "Now who is the next witness?"

Mr. Leatherskin stated that this was all the evidence forthcoming at present. He should ask for a remand. The inquest took place on the following day at the Priory. Mr. Satchell was hourly expected from the "drooping west." His intimate knowledge of the deceased baronet's private affairs would doubtless supply some material evidence. The origin of this affray was at present shrouded in mystery. Sir Sidney must have known something against the prisoner to have ridden so warmly up to him. If the chairman credited Brimley's evidence, her conduct had been flighty, but venial. She doubtless considered herself the object of the prisoner's attentions; but Mr. Leatherskin believed that later on that damsel would have found herself deserted for metal more attractive—

to wit, the Priory plate-chest. At some such shrine the prisoner's attentions were really intended to be paid. In any case, he begged for a remand.

The prisoner, on being asked if he had anything to say, merely reminded the bench that the whole evidence showed, as indeed was the fact, that beyond frightening the late baronet's horse, he was in no sense or way answerable for Sir Sidney's death. He had started the mare in self-defence. He wished to divert Sir Sidney's attention to the management of his animal, while he escaped from the baronet's fury into the adjacent wood. Prisoner admitted freely that he had no business in Redburn Park. He allowed that he was a trespasser upon the private grounds of his assailant. Still, it was a strong measure to deal with a mere case of trespass as Sir Sidney had endeavoured to deal with him.

Some applause from the unwashed behind their arrow-headed spikes greeted the conclusion of the prisoner's defence. Mr. Podge

declared that such an outbreak of opinion was scandalous and indecent, and he had a good mind to clear the court of the lot of them. Silence being restored, the chairman wiped his forehead, pushed back his notes, and harangued—

"Let the case, then, be remanded. But, without prejudging in any way its merits, I must beg, before we separate, to express, on behalf of the Blankshire bench, the indignation with which we regard the perpetration of this dastardly outrage. This is no common tragedy—as when a collier kicks his wife to death; or a woman insures her child in a burial club, and puts it subsequently into the canal. One can be envisaged with occurrences such as these, highly regrettable in their way, and yet feel that the social framework is safe. But when a baronet and a deputy-lieutenant is felled to the earth in his own park, like one of his own stags, then indeed a Briton can only feel that the bulwarks of the Constitution are tottering, and that the framework of society

is going to pieces by the board. (Applause, which was not checked.) I was in my own person almost brought face to face with this scene of bloodshed. In fact, I parted from my esteemed and lamented neighbour in Redburn High Street, and he rode from parting with me to his doom. We parted with mutual expressions of esteem and regard. Now, had I been in his saddle, had my feet been in his lamented—ahem—stirrups, your chairman would at the present moment have been weltering—I say deliberately weltering—from the attack of an assassin." (Sensation and renewed applause.)

The prisoner here broke in, and protested against the use of the word "assassin," which was unfair, prejudicial, and assumed his guilt. Prisoner had always understood that the law of England held every man innocent till his guilt was proven. The chairman reversed that process.

Mr. Delvey Podge, highly indignant that such a lighter should run under his bows when he was going, oratorically speaking,

sixteen knots an hour, exploded outright at this interruption. "Don't bully me, sir, or think to intimidate me in the execution of a public duty! I have no doubt you would like to do for me, as you did for the Egyptian—that is to say, the baronet—yesterday. Don't come your 'law of England' over me! I sit here to-day to administer the law of Blankshire." (Applause.)

"You had him there," whispered Mr. Thistleton Shorthorn, with a chuckle to his yoke-fellow of justice. "Good, good, upon my word!"

"With regard to the young person Brimley," resumed the chairman, modulating his voice from the stern to the pathetic, "I hope that this will be a lesson to her. These followers of our domestics are pressed upon us in season and out of season. In this case, a baronet's life is sacrificed; in another, a plate-chest is rifled. Had Sir Sidney not perceived the prisoner, his life would have been preserved, but his spoons would probably have been missing. And what,

after all, is plate as compared with existence!"

This brilliant anti-climax affected Miss Whiffle even to tears. She leant heavily on Captain Mayne's shoulder, and murmured, "How beautiful!"

"Thank Gaud! nothing in my cupboard but electro-plate," observed the less impressionable captain.

"But they might injure *you!*" sighed Matilda, sobbing anew, and leaning heavier still.

"It's dooced good of you to say so," returned the embarrassed captain, hardly hitting the meaning which he meant to convey.

And it is just possible that the proposal might have then taken place which Blankshire had for a quarter of a century been so patiently expecting, had not the harsh voice of the chairman just then recommenced.

"The prisoner has told you that he is not guilty of this particular charge," pursued Mr. Delvey Podge, with an awful face. "And those in court, who like his general

appearance, are quite welcome to believe him innocent. But without prejudging either this case or any other case, I may observe generally, that the conclusion, drawn in my own mind from a long and varied magisterial experience, is that even when a prisoner is not guilty of the charge of which he stands accused, he is sure to be guilty of something else. Let the case be remanded."

And remanded the case would have been had not a whisper then passed round the court that Mr. Satchell, the long-expected, had arrived. Exit Leatherskin hurriedly to confer with his London colleague. Expectation generally on tiptoe as to what Satchell would say, what Satchell would know: he would recognize the prisoner; he would not recognize him; and so forth.

The prisoner himself contributing something to the babble of voices and opinions, the chairman demanded sharply, "What does he say, Picker?"

Picker, the large, returned in his infinitesimal voice, which he seemed to have stolen

from General Tom Thumb, "I think he said, sir, that he wished old Satchell at the devil."

"The prisoner has every chance of preceding Mr. Satchell to that destination," retorted the chairman, with a cowlike playfulness.

This convulsed the court for some minutes. Even Podge himself felt surprised at his own brilliancy. Re-enter at the end of this merriment, Leatherskin, Satchell following in his wake. The court is so full, that the two attorneys have a good deal of climbing and wriggling to go through before they can reach the central well allotted to their order. They arrive, notwithstanding, somehow.

"This, sir, is Mr. Satchell," said Leatherskin, looking upwards from the well, and introducing his colleague. They would hear the truth now about the prisoner, thought the more sanguine portion of the audience. Meantime, Satchell, a rather shrunken impersonification of legal truth, bowed from his well to the bench impending above him.

"Have the goodness to glance at the

prisoner, Mr. Satchell," suggested the chairman, "and see if you can identify him. If not, I shall adjourn the court."

Satchell did not look at the accused in the first instance. He looked only down upon his black bag, which he tilted on to the green baize table before him. Opening this, he extracted two photographs. Then, and not before, he looked towards the dock. In the midst of a silence so profound that not merely might one have heard the proverbial pin of such occasions actually drop, but one did actually hear Mrs. Hammersley munching something crisp of an unknown nature in the jury-box—the attorney compared the likenesses, one by one, with the features of the prisoner. Satchell might have been a visitor at the Royal Academy, referring to his catalogue, and the accused man might have been a statue, whose description the attorney wished to read, so coolly was all this done. Having completed his comparison, Mr. Satchell evinced no signs of either triumph or disappointment. He merely

bowed a second time to the chairman, and said—

"I think I had better be sworn." Accordingly, Satchell kisses the book, amid breathless excitement. Then he said, "I am an attorney and solicitor, practising at Gray's Inn. I had the management of the late Sir Sidney Leyland's affairs. I identify the prisoner as one Gilbert Archer, of half a dozen addresses in Islington and that vicinity."

A murmur of relieved suspense followed this announcement. Everybody breathed freely again. Everybody, who had put off and pent up their coughs for the last few minutes, took this opportunity to have them out, and have done with them.

Satchell resumed :—"The prisoner's manner of life at each of these apartments was simple, unostentatious, migratory. He ran up a score in each case with the nearest butcher, baker, and candlestick maker. While meat, bread, and candles were trustfully supplied, Archer remained at anchor. When payment was demanded, he hoisted sail, and

left the landlady and the three tradesmen to console each other. He never paid for anything, and so managed to live cheaply. In short, at Islington, Archer was at his last ebb, neediest of the needy, living at hide-and-seek with creditors, just outrunning the constable. This is the Islington photograph of Gilbert Archer. It was done for a young lady, and never paid for. Perhaps, Mr. Leatherskin, you will kindly hand it up to the bench."

"'Tis a speaking likeness," said the chairman. "You can enter the accused as Gilbert Archer on the charge-sheet."

"About the month of May last," pursued Satchell, "Islington lost sight of Mr. Gilbert Archer. Islington was not inconsolable at the loss. He sank, in fact, beneath the social surface. He made some parade of sailing to New South Wales. He got about as far as old South Wales, or only a very little further. For in June emerges at Penzance, one Mr. Vincent Snabley. Now Snabley has dropped from the clouds upon that town. Not a soul

knows a word of his antecedents. But Snabley is bursting with cash, and soon begins to cut a local figure. He keeps a good round balance at the leading bank. He mixes freely in the town society. Snabley is vain, and believes himself a lady-killer. At the request of some fair Cornish acquaintance he is again weak enough to submit his features to the sun artist. Now Archer was needy, and Snabley is rich, but with this exception the Penzance photograph and the Islington likeness represent the same physiognomy, as I think the bench will agree, if Mr. Leatherskin will hand this up also."

Podge and Shorthorn brought their heads together over the second portrait.

"Place 'alias Vincent Snabley' after the name of Archer," said the chairman. "We are getting on. It was stingy of the prisoner having in reserve all this string of names not to allow us this morning at least one to start with."

"Now arises the question," continued the lawyer, "of why Archer has fled so far west,

and of why Archer has chosen to transmute himself to Snabley."

"I suppose he changed his name on coming into all this property," suggested Podge, with a fat smile.

"Under a name and arms clause," added Satchell, giving the chairman's jest a legal elaboration. "In that case his armorial bearings ought to be a pair of handcuffs quartered with two keys, with the motto, 'Fast bind, fast find.' Anyhow, this Snabley descends upon Penzance like Jove in a shower of gold. Now, to whom did this rain of riches rightly belong? Not to Vincent Snabley, nor yet to Gilbert Archer. But I suspect, by succession to an intestate, it belonged partly to the late Sir Sidney Leyland." (Great sensation in court.)

"In fact," said the chairman, "the prisoner first took Sir Sidney's money and then took Sir Sidney's life."

"I have been looking after this Archer for a long time past," explained the attorney; "the crime which I am endeavouring to bring

home to him is sufficiently serious; but I am bound to say I cannot connect it at present with this fatal encounter for which he is now in the dock."

"Did I not say so?" exclaimed Mr. Delvey Podge to the audience, in solemn triumph. "I announced early in these proceedings that the prisoner had done something else. I can only repeat that in a long and varied magisterial experience this guiding maxim has never failed me. It has been my sheet anchor."

"A Daniel come to judgment," observed Mr. Shorthorn, backing his chief.

"This second charge is quite independent of to-day's," concluded Satchell; "therefore I do not propose to go into it at present. Besides, my evidence is incomplete. My watch wants a mainspring to set all the secondary wheels revolving. Meantime, I have little or no light to throw on this affray with Sir Sidney; except that the prisoner did me the honour to dog me all the way from Penzance to Stembury station ten

days back. So that I fear he came first by my means on the scene of action. I had been inquiring rather closely for him at Penzance; I did not then know that, phœnix-like, Hesperian Snabley had rebloomed from the ashes of Islingtonian Archer. He got wind of my inquiries through a woman's chatter. This fellow always pays court to the softer sex. His courtship of the Priory lady's maid was merely to get intelligence of my movements. I have nothing more to say."

Satchell retired from the witness-box with a burst of applause.

Mr. Sinclair Blaggs, of the *Western Juno*, came forward at this juncture with some hesitation, and begged to tender a supplementary crumb of evidence. Mr. Blaggs would not detain the court five minutes by his statement. On May the 10th last, the prisoner had shared a fly with witness from the Royal Railway Tavern in their town to and from an inquest held at the Merlin in Redburn. A man unknown had been found dead on the downs above that village. The "boots" had

introduced Archer to witness's notice by saying that a strange gentleman in bed upstairs desired a lift to the inquest, and would pay half the expense of the vehicle. Archer had so named himself in the fly, and represented that he was connected with the London press. Prisoner had imbibed somewhat freely during the day, and deported himself at the proceedings once or twice in an eccentric fashion. Witness had put him down as a novice and a numskull on that occasion, but did not know what to think now. The body found at Redburn had never been identified, but there was no suspicion of foul play. The medical evidence proved that death had resulted from heart disease. Archer had returned that night to London.

By the prisoner:—The half of the fly had been duly paid for.

Inspector Picker, after deputing Archer's custody to another constable, then entered the witness-box, and confirmed Mr. Blaggs as to the fact of Archer's attendance at the Merlin inquest. Picker had recalled the

prisoner's features on his arrest over-night, but had been unable, till Mr. Blaggs had spoken, to specify when or where he had previously seen Archer.

The prisoner was then duly remanded, and this terminated the proceedings for the day.

The chairman leant back in his armchair with a simper of complacency on his face. A circle of admiring friends thronged around him to tender their congratulations on the lustre of his forensic achievements.

The court cleared slowly. Satchell and Richard Leyland met at the entrance and shook hands.

"How do you intend to get back to the Priory?" inquired the lawyer.

"Faith," exclaimed Richard with a shrug; "on my feet, as I came. Unless you will take me in your fly, Mr. Satchell."

"There is not a fly to be got in the town for love or money," replied the other. "Well, let us trudge. 'Tis a waste of time, when time is gold. But it will stretch my legs, cramped with all these hours of railway

travelling, and we have a great deal to talk over."

"My aunt was too ill this morning," explained Richard, as they stepped out vigorously side by side, "to be cumbered with the cares of my conveyance; and I did not like to assume the direction of the stables, everything being, of course, at sixes and sevens."

"This will be a terrible break-up," was the lawyer's next observation, as they shook off the town and gained the open country.

"My aunt is completely prostrated," said Richard, shaking his head.

"My first anxiety regards Lady Leyland," pursued his companion. "How much does she know of what is going to happen at the Priory? How much do you know yourself?"

"We know—at least my aunt told me," corrected Richard, kicking a pebble out of his road, "that this Mr. Ivory will now be virtually owner of the estates."

"You know it," nodded the lawyer, draw-

ing a long breath. "That's a great relief. I don't like announcing things to ladies. You see, her ladyship has her own property, and all the personalty at Redburn is left her. I drew Sir Sidney's will. My counterpart will be down during the day. But then the debts will have to be paid, and the margin will be nothing tremendous. I am sorry for *you*."

"My uncle always told me frankly he could do nothing for me," murmured Richard.

"You see," said Satchell, easing his right arm by changing his bag to the left, "your cousin Julian sold the Priory over your uncle's head. 'Twas a rascally piece of business. That fellow there was mixed up in it somehow."

"The prisoner?" interrogated Richard, with a start. "You don't say so? That is news indeed!"

"Ay, ay!" continued Satchell, with a chuckle, "our Islington-Penzance worthy was in this, either as bottle-holder, or plunder-sharer, or Lord knows how. I had even

darker suspicions at one time, but they won't work; I can't square them with the rest."

"I can hardly say how you arouse my interest, Mr. Satchell."

"I was never so tantalized before by any inquiry," the lawyer went on, scraping his chin. "The case promises, and promises, and yet it won't come to a head. It does not crystallize. It remains fluid, formless, chaotic. In fact, I am like a dairy-maid, churning all the materials for butter, and yet the butter refuses to come."

"I think I take you," replied Richard, knitting his brows to consider.

"You have seen a child with the disordered pieces of a puzzle. Well, he has a vague idea, from its shape and pattern, where each portion belongs; but till the central piece is accurately placed, it is only labour in vain for him. But, when this is done, all the other portions leap into their appropriate positions, and arrange themselves around almost spontaneously."

"There is a link missing in your case?" hazarded Richard, in parenthesis.

"The very word I wanted—a missing link," said the lawyer, adopting the phrase with emphatic approval.

"Has nothing new transpired from this morning's evidence?" Richard inquired, eyeing the perplexed countenance of the lawyer. "One or two features in this business are to me inexplicable. For instance, why did my poor uncle ride so fiercely at this fellow?"

"The Leyland temper is proverbial," replied Satchell, after a glance behind to make sure that no chance passenger had crept up into earshot. "'A Leyland passion' means, in the Blankshire dialect, a towering rage. Now, Sir Sidney had inherited his full modicum of the family violence. You have asked me a home question, and I shall answer it frankly and with confidence. At a crisis like the present, one ought not to be mealy-mouthed. If I hurt your feelings, stop me——'

"My dear sir," protested Richard, with emotion, "you and I—who else?—are bound to probe this business. Let us shirk nothing because it is painful."

"I have seldom seen a worse tempered man than Sir Sidney," commented the lawyer; "yet I never once saw your uncle lose his temper when it was his advantage to keep it. He lived, in short, in a state of continual self-repression. He was a highly artificial man. He pretended to be good humoured. Stranger still, I have seen him pretend to be angry, when not caring a button, if he thought anger could gain for him his object. You see, I observe character somewhat keenly, Mr. Richard——"

"Your analysis carries conviction," allowed his companion, gravely; "but this makes my uncle's abrupt onslaught upon this Archer still more unlikely."

"Hear me out," asked Satchell, in continuation. "Now, my theory is that a man of very repressed character is, at rare intervals, subject to greater outbreaks and

demoralizations than a person who is frankly and openly ill humoured. How say you?"

"Your explanation is at least ingenious," observed Richard, deep in thought.

"The chairman yonder seems to be a very solemn fool," said Satchell, irreverently. "That newspaper fellow, who tendered his evidence last but one, was completely slurred over."

"I own that I, too, saw little importance in what he came to say," confessed Richard.

"Ah! but then, you haven't steeped yourself in this inquiry as I have," sighed Satchell, with an air of weariness. "You have not lathered on this inquiry with your morning shaving soap, broken into it with your breakfast egg, bitten it between a sandwich at one o'clock, peppered it upon your chop at five, drawn it on with your nightcap, felt it heavy on your chest through the darkness till the daybreak like a nightmare, shouted it out to your clerk who came in to call you."

"I certainly have not," said Richard, much taken aback.

"But I have," observed the lawyer, simply; "and I should thank you to tell me what took Archer to this inquest at the Merlin on the 10th of May last."

"To identify some body," suggested Richard.

"But he *didn't* identify any body," broke in the lawyer; "that's the precise point that baffles me. I seem to have found a new piece of my puzzle from the very oddness of its shape; but, hang me, if I can dovetail this in with the rest anywhere."

"This vagabond may have had half a dozen independent irons in the fire, Mr. Satchell."

"He may, Mr. Leyland; and again he may not."

"I should cudgel my brains no further to-day," was Richard's advice.

"I wish that I could learn anything about this fellow who was found dead upon the downs," persisted Satchell, ignoring his com-

panion's proposed adjournment of the subject.

"Anything important, you mean?" corrected Richard.

"Anything trivial, I mean," insisted the other, pettishly.

"Well, if you want trivialities about this dead man," said Richard, with some hesitation, "here is one. But don't accuse me of childishness when you have heard it."

"Out with it," encouraged the lawyer.

"Well, he owed a certain Mrs. Dredge two pounds ten."

Satchell stopped dead short in the middle of the road. "Good God! Say that name again!"

"'Mrs. Dredge.' What is the matter?"

"Who told you this?" gasped the lawyer, leaning against the hedge for support.

"I was given this dead man's prayer-book, found upon his body by—well, I was given it—in fact, only yesterday. Turning the leaves idly over, when the young—giver left me, I found two of them adhering together.

These I separated with a pen-knife, and discovered that the cause of their adhesion had been——"

"For mercy's sake, Leyland, get on."

"A memorandum, upon which the book had been closed before the ink was dry. It ran: 'I owe Mrs. Dredge two pounds ten.' Absurd enough. In short, I remember now that I never took off my clothes last night, and here is the book in my pocket, to speak for itself."

"At what page?" demanded the attorney, hoarsely, clutching at the volume like a vulture.

"One moment. I will find you the place. There. What can you make of that, Mr. Satchell?"

Mr. Satchell, whatever he made of the entry, proceeded to make something very extraordinary of himself; for, in the first place, he flung his black bag up into the air. Then he threw his hat wildly in the same direction. Lastly and literally, he there and then, in the public road, executed a species of wild dance, between a naval hornpipe and

the Highland fling. It was, in the words of Coleridge's "Christabel," frightful there, to see a most staid attorney in an extensive London practice tripudiate like a Bacchante for the benefit of the Stembury turnpike trust. We presume that Mr. Satchell meant to furnish a moving illustration of his theory just propounded, that repressed men, when they do give way, give way with a vengeance.

Richard, speechless with astonishment, looked on. At last the hornpipe ceased, and Satchell came towards him, trolling part of a long-forgotten drinking song of the attorney's youth.

"Are you unwell, Mr. Satchell?"

"Never better. The missing link! Here it is! 'When I drain the rosy bowl!' Hip, hip, hurrah!"

And there seemed some danger of a second edition of the hornpipe.

"Compose yourself, Mr. Satchell. Missing link?"

"Is this a time to be composed?" retorted

the lawyer. "Don't I know his handwriting? Don't I know his landlady? Don't I know, that if he were dead and sat upon on May the 10th, that he couldn't have sold the estate reversion on May the 21st? Don't I see now—and an idiot I was not to guess it before—that the whole of this business has been trumped up between that damned Jew and Archer? Haven't I got them both now on the hip?—'with a hey, ho, chevy! with a lass and a glass and a friend at a pass. Hark forward, hark forward, tantivy!"

"Then this unclaimed dead man was——'"

"Julian Leyland, your cousin, and heir to Redburn."

"And this prayer-book——"

"Will make you owner of ten thousand a-year."

"Then Salvia was right. There is a fate in all this."

"Never mind Salvia, whoever she is, now," said the lawyer, fairly remastering his composure. "But put your best leg foremost with me back to Stembury. I believe we

can end this matter out of hand. Anyhow, it is worth a trial. Back, my friend, to Stembury."

"For what purpose?"

"To see Gilbert Archer in his prison-cell."

CHAPTER VII.

CONFESSION.

GILBERT ARCHER had been brought back to his cell from the court-house about two hours. Public opinion had been divided on the subject of his merits in the streets during his return. Very tumultuous proceedings had ensued, and Mr. Superintendent Picker had been roughly hustled. Mr. Delvey Podge, driving home in his ponderous yellow barouche, with his two small hatched-faced daughters, had received several unwelcome testimonials to his judicial abilities, in the shape of cabbage-stalks and cauliflowers launched at his vehicle. Miss Whiffle had been gallantly rescued by Captain Mayne from two small boys, who had called her "granny," and she was now placed in safe

asylum at a bun-shop, where she was still sipping brandied cherries, and biting sponge cake. Captain Mayne said that, upon his honour, a contested election might be going on. Mrs. Hammersley's bonnet had been crushed out of shape, and she had lost two poppy heads and an ear of corn in the market-place.

Archer lolled in his cell with a certain moody satisfaction at being the centre of so much popular attention. He could listen to the tumult gradually dying away outside. He heard the newsboys calling a special edition of the *Western Juno*. He was the hero of the hour. His sensations were not wholly disagreeable. After an interval, came steps at his cell door, succeeded by a turning of locks, and a grating of hinges, and then entered the turnkey, ushering in two gentlemen with an order from Mr. Shorthorn, the magistrate, to "interview" the prisoner.

Archer knew them both at a glance, Satchell and Richard Leyland. The plot was thickening. He felt more and more his self-im-

portance in being waited upon by two such magnates. The threads of a baronet's affairs were in his hands. A nod from him could dash down Mr. Rupert Ivory from his pedestal of Blankshire importance. Surely, penal servitude for a few years was nothing to his present delicious sense of power. The turnkey brought in two chairs for the accommodation of the visitors, and then retired himself outside the cell, telling Satchell with a wink and a nudge, that a whistle would bring him round at any time in a "jiffy."

"Much flattered, gentlemen," began Archer, doing the prison honours with an airy impudence, "and honoured by this visit. I am a little pressed for room here, and the ventilation is not all that could be desired. You must take me, in fact, gentlemen, in the rough."

"You are not a bad sort of fellow, we know," said Satchell, propitiatingly; "but you would have money, you see, and you would be a tip-top gentleman, and so—here you are."

"I have a fine palate and expensive tastes," observed the prisoner, in a boastful tone. "I

was formed by nature to enjoy a large income."

"Exactly," concurred the lawyer, dryly; "the only misfortune was that nature forgot the supplies."

"Society has used me shamefully," said Archer.

"The last gentleman whom I visited," replied Satchell, "in a situation similar to yours, had precisely the same grievance against society. Such concurrent and independent testimony is conclusive."

"Say what you came to say," spake Archer, nettled by the irony. "No more bush-beating. What is in the wind?"

"Your game is up," replied Satchell abruptly. "That is all we came to say."

"You can't think me soft enough to admit that, Mr. Satchell?"

"I wish you to admit nothing for the present; but simply to listen to me. Give me your attention merely. No expression of assent or dissent is required on your part. When I have done, I shall have a proposal to

make to you. Until then, you need not even speak."

"Cut along, then," said the prisoner, ungraciously enough.

"Julian Leyland sold the reversion of Redburn to Rupert Ivory in Rupert Ivory's office, on May the 21st last, for eight thousand pounds."

"So he did," exclaimed the prisoner, in a browbeating tone. "I suppose you are going to deny it. You can't swear his seal and signature off the sale-deed."

"Who told *you* all about it?" inquired Satchell, turning on him suddenly; "for your own interest, you had better not interrupt me with comment. You are telling me too much."

Archer looked at this a shade chapfallen, and began rather uneasily to gnaw his under lip.

"Now there was only one slight impediment to prevent Julian Leyland from cheerfully walking into Rupert Ivory's office upon that particular morning, and this was that he had

been eleven days before buried in Redburn churchyard."

At this the prisoner gave a grim kind of gurgle, and beads of sweat broke out upon his forehead. Shivering, as if with cold, he shrank up into a heap against the corner of his cell; but no articulate word would he utter.

"You are wise, my friend, not to interrupt me," pursued Satchell, who had completely taken in with a corner of his eye the full effect of the last communication, "and I am sure that you will continue as discreetly silent. Well, some one sold Redburn to Rupert Ivory; and some one walked out of the office with his pockets full of bank-notes. And, as dead men don't usually either walk or require cash, I fear some one must have personated Julian Leyland; now, who could this some one be?"

The prisoner gave a writhe, and growled out an ugly, half-smothered imprecation. The hero of the "special edition" of the *Western Juno* looked more like a chidden cur just

then, than anything particularly romantic or distinguished.

"Now, though I maintain that Julian Leyland dropped down dead on Redburn downs, the newspapers would have it that Julian Leyland was drowned on the Sussex coast. To set this discrepancy at rest, I have just telegraphed to Mrs. Hoppey, of 102, Burlington Street, Brighton, to oblige me by putting herself at once into the train; as I have every confidence of being able to allay her anxiety regarding her drowned lodger by showing him to her, dry and breathing, in Stembury gaol. It will be a touching meeting. That concludes my story. Now comes my proposal."

The prisoner at this assumed a less dejected attitude; and shaking himself together again, turned towards them with a forlorn attempt to reassert his normal jauntiness. "What do you want of me?" he asked, hoarsely, rolling his bloodshot eyes like a dilapidated yard lurcher.

"Now, we all know that you are not a bad

sort of fellow," repeated Satchell. It was encouraging to hear this, as from Archer's then most unprepossessing aspect, one might have leapt to a less sanguine conclusion. "In fact, quite a jolly dog, if you are not rubbed the wrong way, and if you are supplied with plenty of cheroots and moselle. And we all know that your head must have been well screwed on to put together the joints of this charming little stratagem. But, you see—a man with your head-piece must see—that now your game is up. The bill remains to be paid, and it will prove rather a heavy one. Take the first item. We all know that you only acted in self-defence in this Priory Park affray, that you never intended to injure the late Sir Sidney; but Blankshire juries are prejudiced, and they don't like their squires being knocked on the head, directly or indirectly. The heavier verdict they bring in against you, my friend, the more these simple farmers will think they compliment Sir Sidney's family. Consequently, by this time to-morrow—unless I speak up for you—a murderer or a man-

slaughterer you will have been pronounced, as sure as my name is Satchell and your name is *not* Snabley."

"Can you avert this?" said the prisoner, incredulously.

"I can state at the inquest, on behalf of the family, that they absolve you of all intentional wish to injure the deceased baronet."

"Were you told by any one to give me this message?" asked Archer, with an air of mystery.

Satchell did not understand the drift of the query, but he deemed it safest to nod assent in a reciprocity of mysteriousness.

"That alters the case," said Archer, drawing a long breath. "As for these addle-headed bumpkins, they may bring it in arson or high treason, for all I care."

"There we become again unreasonable," argued Satchell, with the utmost suavity. "Come, I have a proposition to make. All this must be a great weight on your mind, and is sure to be brought home to you, sooner or later. Make it sooner, my friend, and make clean breast of it."

"What should I get by that?" inquired Archer, not quite so morosely.

"A lighter sentence at the assizes, on the personation charge, an acquittal at the coroner's inquest on the present charge, more liberal fare and greater comfort in gaol before your trial."

"Go on," growled the prisoner, chewing a straw; "that is not half enough yet. Have you no further inducements?"

"None!" cried Satchell, curtly. "I see that you are in league with the money-lender. I shall for the future save my breath."

"You insult me, Mr. Attorney," said Archer, drawing himself up. "I disclaim all association with that overreaching vulgarian. Sir, I am under a cloud, but my instincts are those of a gentleman. I come of a good Highland family. Spare me the indignity of being supposed in compact with a usurer."

"I was only joking," returned Satchell, who had now got the information which he wanted. "You have suffered from the money-lending tribe in your time, my fine fellow, I'll

be bound. Your sentiments do you credit. Then why play into Ivory's hands now?"

"Show me how I am doing so," said Archer, doggedly.

"You have expressed yourself so properly," pursued the attorney, with a twinkle in his eye, "and are at bottom such a really good sort of fellow, that I don't mind taking you into our confidence. As a person with gentlemanly instincts, I know your sympathies are rather with Lady Leyland than with this Ivory." The prisoner winked his eye knowingly. "And that you would not like to see this Jew installed at the Priory, and a person of Lady Leyland's distinction turned out into the lane."

"And this you were also told to tell me?" said the prisoner, with the old look of mystery recurring.

"For the matter of that—yes," agreed Satchell, quite at sea.

"Does it rest with me to baulk Ivory in any way?" interrogated Archer.

"It does so rest," insisted the lawyer. "If

I know my man—and the wolf and the vulture are not difficult to know—Ivory will take forcible possession of the Priory on the day after Sir Sidney's funeral; unless I can get a statement from you that his deed is a sham. Now, we shall get him out again, of course, eventually; but any intermediate possession by such a——"

"Crocodile," suggested the prisoner.

"Thank you; not bad at all," applauded the attorney. "Yes, any possession by such a crocodile, would be peculiarly undesirable."

"I do not wish his swelling self-importance to be pampered by feeling himself lord and master of such a domain for a single hour," said the prisoner, emphatically.

"You are the right sort," commended Satchell, slapping his knee, "and I see, we shall come to terms. You only play the cards of this blustering, arrogant extortioner, by refusing to speak. You do yourself no good in the long run, and you put a lady to much unnecessary expense and inconvenience. Such a course of action is, we all know, re-

pugnant to a man so polite, so much in the good graces of the sex."

Again the old look of intelligence stood in the eyes of the prisoner.

"Supposing I were to make a statement," stipulated Archer, smoothed back into complete self-complacency by the dexterous concluding compliment. "You would not, I dare say, object to telling Lady Leyland—from me—that I solely made such a statement to prevent her being disturbed at the Priory." Something of the old dandy air survived in the tones and gestures of the prisoner, as he delivered this with a flourish.

"Your message shall certainly be conveyed to her ladyship," Satchell promptly returned, wondering in his sleeve that such a condition should emanate from such a quarter.

"Then give me half an hour to turn it over," concluded Archer. "And hark'ee, Mr. Attorney, when you return, in case I am in the humour to speak, bring in a bottle of good wine with you—the best this wretched pro-

vincial town can afford; it will be dry work talking, if I mean to talk."

"It's rather irregular," observed the attorney, dubiously, as he and Richard left the cell; "but it is politic to humour him, considering the interests at stake. If there is any fuss with the visiting justices hereafter, the Redburn 'Comet' port and '25 claret will make it all right. I've a lively remembrance of that same port wine myself. Did time permit, I really do not think, with such a property at hazard, that a bottle would be wasted on our friend. That wine would make a cat speak!"

In half an hour they had returned. Archer had hardly shifted his position in the interval. Satchell, with a smack of an amateur contrabandist, produced the wine from the back pocket of his great coat, whence the bottle neck had most obviously protruded. But Cerberus, in the person of the turnkey, had discreetly winked while they passed in.

"I have tasted better," said Archer, holding it up jauntily to catch the light from the single

barred loophole window in the top of his cell. "But it will do. Heigho! I was born to be a gentleman."

"You have led me a most precious dance," threw in the attorney, adroitly. "Your power of combination reminds me of Napoleon. You ought to be at the head of some public department. By the Lord! Mr. Archer, you are a man of genius. Your only slip was sending this foolish Irish substitute to Australia. You ought to have gone yourself, and then, by Jove! I believe you would have thrown me off the scent completely. That was your Moscow, my Napoleon! As for that improvised drowning of Julian Leyland, that was your Austerlitz. Masterly! magnificent!"

"Ha, ha!" chuckled the prisoner, sipping his wine and smacking his lips with gusto between the sips. "You don't know half my little contrivances in this business yet. Baronet, lawyer, and money-lender, I have put you all three about nicely. I have half a mind to speak."

"Make it a whole mind," persuaded Satchell,

blandly, replenishing Archer's glass. "You will feel all the easier afterwards."

"Here goes, then," commenced the prisoner, propping himself comfortably into a corner of the cell and pushing his legs out. "Put the wine within my reach and don't interrupt me. Here begins an eventful episode in the life of an accomplished dog, endowed with the tastes of a gentleman, and cursed with the means of a pauper.

"An anterior event in my career had interested me in the name of Leyland, consequently, when I stumbled across Julian Leyland first in a chop-house, I resolved to cultivate him. I did not even know of his expectations then, but I had an instinctive idea I might use him somehow. He was a dismal fellow, a man dogged all his days by ill luck, one who infected even his associates with the particles and the atmosphere of his own unprosperity.

"This pretty little scheme would never have entered the brain of your humble servant, had not a diabolical suggestion on the part of this

miserable invalid implanted the seeds of its further development in the fertile brain of your deponent, Gilbert Archer. The galvanic spark (excuse metaphor), which was to fire this curious train of circumstances, was evolved and generated thus. I sat telling Julian Leyland in Seymour Street one day, disconsolately enough, that I was to be shipped off for the antipodes. Under what circumstances my departure had become desirable, I do not here intend to say. A free passage was at my disposal, and a stated quarterly allowance, so long as I chose to reside in the colony; but not otherwise. With this view no stipend was to be paid me unless I appeared in person at a certain banker's in Adelaide to claim my supplies. Whereupon, this lazy, languishing Julian suggested that I should stay at home and get some one to personate me out there. Well, I hardly noticed this most futile proposition then; as to the practical mind—and my mind is a very practical one—it became at once obvious that my colonial deputy would simply pocket his principal's quarterly remit-

tance. No, I dismissed Julian's ridiculous expedient then, but the single word *personate* somehow got itself written in abiding characters on the tablets of my memory, and the mischief was begun. Well, I was the victim of circumstances. They made themselves into this scheme, and drew me within their whirlpool. Everything came so pat, so ready-made. I was as passive as a boat in the Maelstrom. Let us be business-like, and take this matter, so to speak, from the egg.

"You have a long story before you, and, if you mind rheumatism, you had better shift your chair. In that portion of the cell the wall is dampish, and will not improve your coat-cuff. And, just look you here, Mr. Satchell, was there a fate in this matter, or was there not? Ivory must needs go and quarrel with his head clerk, his factotum, his familiar and confidential deputy in the loan department, just at the very nick of time to render my scheme practicable. Had Ivory dismissed his clerk one fortnight sooner or one week later, all this hurly-burly would have been

spared, and I should be by this time a promising sheep farmer, for all I know, in the under-world. But it was to be.

"Julian, for some six weeks before his decease, had opened negociations with Ivory and Co. He read an advertisement of that enterprising firm in a newspaper; or, to be strictly accurate, in a piece of newspaper, which intervolved a chop for his invalid's dinner; this I, always a good-natured fool, had sallied forth to bring. Fate again, I say. Had that chop been wrapped in the 'shipping intelligence,' or in the 'births, deaths, and marriages,' this precious business would have been spared. Well, Ivory and Co.—trust them for that—worded their notice seductively enough to entrap the sanguine, the embarrassed, the uncritical portion of the community. Poor Julian was a fish who fell under all three categories, and he greedily snapped up the bait.

"Accordingly, in reply to a written overture from Julian, Hake, Ivory's clerk, arrived at Islington a morning or two after the chop

purchase. By Julian's special request (fate again) I was present at this and at all his subsequent interviews with the firm, as visibly represented by Hake. I was there, to back up my friend generally, to see that Ivory's clerk played him no tricks, and to guarantee (a pious fraud) his solvency. First, Hake consented to lend Julian five pounds on the security of a bill of sale on his two rooms' furniture. I hardly think, to do Hake justice, that a broker would have given their owner more. The second loan, for Julian became worse, and his doctor's bill arrived in the interim, brought a possible landed security and a larger amount of accommodation upon the carpet. Hake, whose nose was as keen for sniffing out reversions, as a china collector's for routing up Chelsea teacups, must needs see above the mantelpiece—not the prickly-looking specimen of Derbyshire spa, not the cat ingeniously constructed out of an exotic shell, not the Red Riding-Hood, whose head was excavated as a receptacle for lucifers—but the framed

and glazed picture of Redburn Priory, in the county of Blankshire, the seat of Sir Sidney Leyland, Baronet, to whom this plate is humbly inscribed by his obliged and obedient servant—— I forget the engraver's name, but that is not material. I dare say you have seen the original. Well, I always shall maintain that the fallow deer in the foreground are out of all perspective. But be that as it may, from the picture, out came Julian's relationship to the owner of those dappled ruminants; from the owner, we got to the present position of the family settlement. Hake's demeanour from the condescending, not to say defiant, changed to great sweetness, and a most deferential fawning melancholy. Julian was exactly the class of customer that firm of sharks loved of all others to entangle.

"Mr. Ivory, said Hake, rubbing his hands, and bowing and scraping, as he rose to take his leave, would call in person and tender his respects to Mr. Leyland. Ivory never came (fate again), or he would have seen Julian Leyland and myself, side by side, and that

would have crushed my scheme in embryo, for the third time. In short, Hake, at his departure, became quite pathetic, nay, almost lachrymose, in his regrets, that a gentleman of Mr. Leyland's connections and ultimate position should have condescended—I think that was his phrase—to accept so paltry an accommodation from their firm. Hake proceeded to trust, with a cringe, that their future dealings would be on a scale more proportionate to their client's social importance; and more in the same key, which soothed our weak Julian's vanity not a little. I do not know any greater satisfaction to a poor devil under a cloud than being treated with unusual deference. Even, when the motive of that respect is as transparent as it must have been to Julian in this instance, that does not abate the pleasure of a sensation in all respects so novel and so composing to an embarrassed man.

"Well, to shorten what must be a history of some prolixity, at Hake's next coming, Julian's tin deed-box was produced, and

examined *coram populo;* that is to say, before its owner, Hake, and myself as *amicus curiæ,* or bottle-holder, though that is hardly an exact translation of the phrase. The documents therein contained, and a corroborative visit to Doctors' Commons, undertaken at his own suggestion by the energetic Hake, at once enabled the firm of Ivory and Co. to appreciate with all necessary legal accuracy, and in full and sufficient detail of information, the exact position of Julian Leyland, as heir in reversion of the Redburn estate. The more Ivory and Co. learnt, the keener they grew to negociate with a needy and inexperienced man for the sale to them of that reversion. On his third visit, Hake offered three thousand pounds, and I verily believe, that, had I not been at Julian's elbow, the poor fellow would have closed there and then with the usurer. As it was, though I knew how to value a reversion as little as I knew how to work the differential calculus; yet a twinkle of eagerness in the bidder's eye, which the fellow for the life of him could not

suppress, persuaded me plainly enough that the reversion was marketably worth double that amount; and that, for some reason or other, which I saw existed, but whose nature I knew not, Ivory and Co. were very anxious in this instance to deal. Now you and I, retrospectively surveying these events with the fuller knowledge which comes *ex post facto*, are able to ascribe this eagerness to Ivory's insane and absorbing day-dream, craze, monomania, what you will, to become one day a landed magnate and to found a family. But, for the present, let that pass.

"Hake offered, as I said, three thousand pounds; and, before Julian had time to reply, I drew him aside into the bedroom, exerting a certain gentle force, so loth was the poor fellow to go. There, apart from Mr. Hake, I told him that no one ever lost in this world by opening his mouth; and my advice was this, that Julian should pluck up a spirit now or never; should re-enter the sitting-room and inform Hake in a *nonchalant* manner, that the price of the reversion was ten

thousand pounds, and that Ivory and Co. might take or leave it, as they pleased. That was the amount, and to that amount he purposed to adhere. Should it prove inconvenient to Ivory and Co. to purchase from him on these terms, there were, doubtless, other firms in the reversion market who would be less backward. Hake by all his gods protested that we were insane to name an amount so exorbitant; and he declared, with frequent imprecations, that there was an end of the business. On behalf of Ivory and Co., he there and then gave our offer an emphatic negative; and so in high dudgeon drew on his gloves and disappeared.

"Julian, deceived by his tempestuous exit, thought the game was really up, and denounced my intervention in no measured terms. I had, he told me, spoilt everything, baulked him from opulence, been a traitor to friendship, and more in this strain. You know what these invalids are! I re-assured him as best I could, accepted his petulance with the utmost good humour, and by next

morning's post was justified in my strategical operations. Ivory wrote himself, announcing that he had dismissed his clerk Hake at an hour's notice; that the head of the firm would henceforward negociate with Julian directly and without any go-between; that my friend's demands were beyond what Mr. Ivory felt inclined to give, as at present advised; but the contemplated transaction was so clearly beneficial to Julian in the present and to Ivory in the hereafter, that it would be a pity it should drop through for the difference of a thousand or two between them. Ivory had a warm, comfortable way of writing about large sums of money, which was absolutely refreshing. To receive one of his letters was nearly as good as handling a five-pound note. I felt almost sure now that Julian would get his ten thousand pounds, and indeed plainly told him so. I now became my friend's benefactor, his one true comrade in adversity, the architect of his future fortunes. I was not greatly elated at this sudden rise in the barometer of my esti-

mation, for Julian was up one day and down the next. So it proved.

"In a morning or two, the reaction set in. Julian's malady had meantime increased. I fancy the excitement of his golden castles in Spain did him no good. Day by day, his creditors became more importunate. He did not owe much, but he owed every one a little; and ten small creditors are often more noisy and harassing than one large creditor of double their aggregate amount. That is sound political economy. Besides worse health and duns clamorous, Julian must needs get an entirely new fad into his head of obligation to his position and his family. His position being up two pair back in Islington, and his family allowing him most philosophically to remain there.

"He discoursed, poor devil! the last time we met (I don't include the inquest; one can't be said to meet a man there), about what was due to his ancestors. I suggested that his obligations to these worthies were shadowy, but that his present necessities,

say for bread and butter, were substantial. Could he sell to the usurers land which a Leyland had held since Bannockburn? I don't think that *was* the battle, but the argument is not affected by my uncertainty. I returned generally, that a man must live; though, glancing across the table at Julian, I remember doubting alike the necessity and the axiom in his case. He had been hitherto pale enough, but those few last days had turned him—not to put too fine a point upon the subject—as green as a gooseberry. Well, he contended that country air might set him up again; and that he would try the effect of a last personal appeal to his uncle, Sir Sidney, in Blankshire. I predicted that both the Blankshire air and the Blankshire uncle would have a very chilling effect upon an invalid. I left him, however, resolute to go; and, indeed, never saw him alive afterwards.

"But he constituted me in his absence (fate again) general opener and answerer of all his dunning letters. He got no others except

Ivory's, and to these also I was empowered to attend; but on no account to tell the money-lender, should inquiries be made for Julian, whither he was gone, or on what errand he had quitted Islington. My friend would in two days report progress by post, and send me his country address. There, anything really urgent would find him, if forwarded; but any missive, which merely said, 'Please pay me; can you pay me? you shall pay me,' need not travel so far as Blankshire for a reply, for the answer in all these cases was simply, 'I can't!'

"So he started; and for half a week having my own outfit to attend to, I hardly gave Julian or his journey a thought. Selfish this, if you please; but I had debts and troubles of my own, and I was really sore at leaving England. About the fourth evening after our last interview, I read in a coffee-house that a dead man had been found on the hills above Redburn, in Blankshire. This might have been any one, but I *knew* it was my friend. Down I rushed by that

very night's mail, just in time to attend the inquest on the following morning. Now I give you my word of honour (though your lip very naturally and incredulously curls at the honour of a gentleman in irons), that I hurried down to this wretched tragedy from pure sympathy and friendship. I had no sinister intent; no, by Heaven, I had none, *yet*. Had I been a worse man, I should never have been drawn into this scheme. Let me tell you also this, that I could then very ill afford to scamper across half England in the cause of a dead friend.

"Heigho! Well, I suppose you do not believe me; I presume, that your legal acumen—which always imputes the worst motive and generally is right—will have it, that I left London on that night with the whole artifice cut and dried, in my side pocket. I tell you emphatically, if I rode to Tyburn for it, that this scheme never struck me, until, within three miles of Redburn village, that petulant newspaper fellow, who told you this morning that I shared his fly

thither, whisked out a photograph of the body; and then it came over me like a flash that my friend *was* dead, and that no living man but myself knew or need know, unless I told them, that he had left the world. Then, just as he, poor fellow, had bade me get a sham Archer to draw my allowance in Adelaide, so might I become a sham Julian, to sell his reversion in London. The eagle, in short, was brought down by a feather from his own wing, though Julian was more vulturine than aquiline in appearance; yet the analogy survives.

"All this came to me in an instant intuitively, like the plan of a mighty epic; all the subordinate episodes arranging themselves around the central conception, I might almost say, automatically. I sketched in a fresh detail at each revolution of the cab wheels; and by the time we had reached the inn door, where the last judicial ceremonials of Britannia were about to be administered, I was in a whirl of mental excitement. The first move in my scheme was hardly difficult.

I need do nothing further at the inquest but control my agitation and hold my tongue. If any one else recognized the dead man (I half hoped they would), I would corroborate their testimony. If no one said this lump of clay was Julian Leyland, nephew and heir to the great baronet over yonder, whose serfs that empanelled and rustic twelve plainly were, every mother's son of them, ascribed to his glebe, hewers of his wood—I also would keep silence. If no one chose to tell these hinds that they were, in inquest phrase, sitting upon the heir-presumptive of all the Leylands—why, neither would I enlighten them.

"And so it all turned out. Not a villager knew the wanderer from Adam, the common road of whose posterity he had newly gone. The Priory happened to be empty and the great family away in town. Otherwise, some old servant might have seen a boyish likeness. Nothing of the kind transpired. Not a soul had anything to tell, except one man, and on his tongue an ox had trodden in a visionary bribe of bags of Ivory's guineas

A verdict in accordance with the medical evidence was given, and the unclaimed body was ordered to be interred. The coroner got into his gig. Our fly stood at the inn door.

"I had hitherto shrunk from seeing Julian. A sense of shame at what I meant to do made me afraid to look the dead man in the face. Yet common sense told me that to leave a grain of doubt, now that ten steps could remove all doubts, would be the act of a semi-madman. I might have fancied a likeness into the photograph. I crept into the dark, miserable attic at the last moment of my stay. The policeman with his thick cotton gloves drew aside the sheet. I shall always to my dying day associate thick cotton gloves with Julian. Strange, I could not take my attention off the glove at such a moment. I believe I looked fully as much at it as at the face; but my divided glance was more than sufficient. I could hardly stagger from the bedroom; yet I got down the creaking wooden stair somehow, and so into my fly, where my travelling companion was

waiting, impatiently, to depart. He rallied me on my agitation, and set me down as a greenhorn at inquests. I was sick of him, and longed for solitude to mature my plans. All that night I was on the railroad—thinking! By eight next morning, I presented myself with a white face at Ophelia Dredge's door, in Islington.

"Now began the eldest-born of the myriad and ten lies of word and deed which my scheme necessitated. I had come as usual, I informed her, to look over Julian's letters. She observed that I had not been there lately. I assented, and asked, with the best air I could assume, if Julian had written since my last visit. No intelligence whatever. I expressed myself much surprised, and I would, with Mrs. Dredge's permission, step into my friend's room, and see what had arrived. Two letters, she told me, one left by a City gentleman, who said his clerk used to come there; and one was the milkman. Merciful Heavens! The great Ivory himself! The plot was plainly thickening. The milkman, she went on to

explain, was becoming violent from the long procrastinated settlement; had abused her, in fact, to the next door for harbouring insolvent lodgers; that was galling to Ophelia's spirit, and she would not 'a-bear' it much longer. It was too tiresome to be troubled with milk at such a moment, burning as I was to open Ivory's letter. Yet I made the right move, and paid the milkman on the spot, to Ophelia's ineffable surprise. This was wisely done in every way. Ophelia had hitherto been prejudiced against me. Possibly she was right. Henceforward, she was all smiles and urbanity. I followed up my advantage at once. Would she let me a bedroom? She shook her head at a request so unexpected. I murmured something about the first fortnight in advance, and she faltered. I produced half a sovereign, and she yielded. An important ingredient in our bargain was the unlimited use to myself of Julian's sitting-room during his—absence. (I did not get out the last word, I remember, very glibly.) To this she made no objection, as I was half free of the room

already, by Julian's express injunctions before he left.

"This bargain concluded to our mutual satisfaction, I ordered some breakfast and installed myself in the dead man's armchair. First, for the money-lender's letter. Mr. Ivory would do himself the honour of waiting upon Mr. Julian Leyland at three o'clock that very afternoon. There was evidently no time to be lost. The morning was getting on. My prime anxiety centered in Julian's tin box of deeds. There it stood on one side of the fireplace, with the letters of the name which I was going to appropriate staring me full in the face. How could I get it open? The missing key was, I supposed, by this time in the possession of the Redburn constable —he of the thick cotton gloves. Faugh! I must get in a locksmith, and my landlady must be sent off the premises, both while I had the box broken open, and, more important still, when Ivory rang the bell and desired to see Julian. On so slight a thread as this hung my notable scheme. If Mrs.

Dredge answered the door, I was done for in the simple and ordinary course of events. Consider: natural question, 'Is Mr. Leyland within?' Natural reply, 'Mr. Leyland is out of town, but Mr. Archer will see you.' Decidedly, my landlady must be disposed of. The girl, her deputy in the housework, I well remembered in Julian's time, as endowed with a nescience on all subjects so profound and so impenetrable, that I need fear no betrayal from her. O divine ignorance, how far more precious than wisdom thou art on many emergencies! That girl never in the whole of her chequered career could succeed, I am thankful to say, in retaining any surname with complete accuracy. But on what errand could Mrs. Dredge be possibly induced to stay out for a whole week-day afternoon—she who, not twice in the revolving year, would so absent herself? I knew that she was a widow by courtesy, but in sadder earnest a deserted wife. The shades held not Mr. Dredge yet. Julian had told me that, though lost to sight and hardly dear to memory, he was yet intermittently heard

of through his own relations, an equally worthless lot, whom, wife-like, Mrs. Dredge was weak enough still to visit. In this direction then must my lever be applied.

"Out I went, and telegraphed from 'Mr. Dredge' (I had no knowledge of his Christian name) to his Ariadne, saying that he had come into a small property and wished to make some kind of amends for the past. Would Ariadne, therefore, forgive and forget, and meet him that afternoon on the shore of Naxos (Cheyne Walk, Chelsea), near the old church, to which any one in the neighbourhood would direct her? Repentant Theseus would disembark from a penny steamer; he could not say which, or precisely when; but Ariadne was to keep a bright look-out upon all of them, as they touched the Chelsea pier. So ran the insidious telegram. Cruel, I concede; but how on earth was I to dislodge so stay-at-home a person as my landlady?

"The bait took only too well. Mrs. Dredge entered about one o'clock, in her best silk gown and with a tearful aspect, to announce

that urgent family affairs had called her suddenly away to a distant part of town; but that the girl would remain; and that as far as a cup of tea went, or a rasher of bacon, Martha Bulstrode could be quite depended upon. I sympathized vaguely; and assured my landlady that bacon and tea would bound my wishes for the afternoon, and that she might trust me not to tempt the general servant into any Icarian flights of cookery beyond the bourn of those two simple requirements. I watched her fluttering draperies fade in the mists of Islington, and instantly upon their disappearance, summoned to my aid a locksmith. To him I confided, in a burst of candour, that, having dined freely in the City over-night, I had parted company with my watch and keys, somewhere in the New Road, on my way home. The mechanic replied with a grin of intelligence, and did his office featly. Open sprang the lid, and a musty pungent smell exhaled from the imprisoned parchments and damp-eaten bundles of letters inside. I half felt as if I was breaking Julian Leyland's

tomb open. Could the locksmith bring me a new key and padlock of the best workmanship within half an hour? He both could and would.

"Thenceforward, until Ivory was due, I read for dear life at the contents of the deed-box. Past conversations with Julian had taught me the general outlines of his expectations; and by reading and rereading what seemed to be the hinging document, namely, a resettlement of the Priory estates by Sir Sidney and Thomas Leyland, Julian's father, I had gained, before the money-lender arrived, a fair smattering of the family history and of the different limitations to which the Redburn property was or had been subject. One little bundle of papers, tied with dull red tape, I chanced upon, and hailed as peculiarly serviceable in the combat of wits about to ensue. When diamond cuts diamond, and the impostor is to be imposed upon, it is as well to look to one's priming and to keep one's powder dry. At such a moment as this, Julian's baptismal certificate

was a perfect treasure-trove. A rude letter from Sir Sidney, refusing cash assistance, was not without its uses. Each of these I could explode upon the money-lender like a bombshell. I determined, if I saw a chance, to hitch both these into the coming conversation.

"My last half-hour before Ivory came, I occupied—not, I think, unwisely—in imitating—let us use no harsher term—Julian's signature, in every direction, up and down a fair foolscap sheet of paper. Some progress I then made; but the finished perfection of my later facsimiles of Julian's weak, womanish handwriting only came to the artist after days of application. I ultimately, however, succeeded in reproducing to the life his spider characters and wiredrawn flourishes.

"While thus engaged, I heard Ivory's ring. He came upon the clock-stroke. Thrusting my page of attempts between the fire-bars, I rushed down to the front door to admit him myself. The girl attempted to assist

at his entrance, but I chided Cinderella sternly down and away into the recesses of her kitchen, saying that neither her hands nor her hair was presentable to my visitor, who was a most particular and important gentleman. I drew back the front door. There stood my antagonist; not at all the kind of man that I expected to see; but not unformidable, all the same. I presumed "Mr. Ivory," and extended my hand. He presumed "Mr. Leyland," and entered the parlour. He found me looking very much better than he expected from his late clerk's account. I returned firmly that a few days in the country had done wonders.

"This was hardly a good beginning, but I embarrassed him in turn by a prompt inquiry after Hake. Ivory shook his head, and waved away the subject with his gloved hand. Hake, he feared, had neither the feelings nor the instincts of a gentleman. I agreed that this was very sad. He next observed that some men were anything but what they seemed. My assent to this plati-

tude half choked me. Still, continued the usurer with a bow, to Hake he owed the pleasure of my acquaintance. That was something in Hake's favour. Should we go to business? By all means. I should find him John Blunt, a frank, outspoken kind of customer. He dealt in reversions and all that kind of speculative property, and I had a reversion to dispose of. Well and good: the only question was the price, and a few more formal inquiries. He always told young men of fashion that they were most foolish to anticipate their expectations; most imprudent to kill, as it were, their golden goose. An honest tradesman like himself, always, in duty bound, made it a point of showing his young clients the full imprudence they were about to commit. Now Messrs. Twist and Tweezer, very good neighbours of his, and in the same line of business—he did not wish to breathe a syllable against them—adopted a wheedling and fulsome manner towards heirs-apparent; which was neither candid nor dignified. He

told young men outright, 'Don't come to me unless you can help it.' He was a kind of dentist, nothing better. If you must have this tooth out, come to him—you would find him more merciful than his brotherhood; but a tooth out was a tooth gone for ever. Did I follow the analogy? I certainly did not; but I felt much easier, and begged to thank him for his well-meant cautions. He proceeded with a burst of candour, calling me his dear young friend, and fearing that I wanted money, that I was, in fact, most sorely pressed for it. Would I correct him if he overstated the case? He was accuracy itself, I allowed, bitterly. Would I persist in doing a very imprudent thing?

"I began to sicken at his unctuous hypocrisy, and answered gruffly that we were losing time, as my mind was made up, and that self-preservation was the first law of nature. Then, what was my price? he simpered, languidly. It was ten thousand pounds, and cheap at the money. There, he said, persuasively, I went beyond him—Twist

and Tweezer would never give me half that amount. Yet, as there was already in the market—he would be frank with me—the leasehold of a little shooting-box in the Redburn neighbourhood, from whence he could watch this investment ripening, so to speak, under his very eye—he would stretch a point, and offer me eight thousand; but Twist and Tweezer were on no account to be told of the bargain; as that firm, being wholly devoid of gentlemanly instincts, would ascribe his generosity to some temporary aberration of intellect.

"I asked three days to think it over. I was on tenter-hooks to close with the rascal at once. But, besides my fear of arousing his suspicions by any indication of over haste, I needed some such interval to acquire Julian's signature to my own critical satisfaction. This delay being, of course, accorded, Ivory would—as a mere matter of form—trouble me with a few preliminary inquiries. Was I on speaking terms with my uncle? Certainly not. I had never seen him since boy-

hood; that was (here I saw a chance of hitching in the certificate) some thirty years ago. But, as one could not be too accurate in a business conversation, I would crave leave to refer to a memorandum in my deed-box, which would, I believed, fix the date of my seeing Sir Sidney to a month. Here, I lifted the box on to the table between us with much solemnity, and opened the recently acquired padlock with the air of being used to it. Out I baled the various bundles of family papers with much ostentation, dealing out my best cards right under Ivory's nose, who, I could see, was keenly and not unnaturally curious. Then, turning the money-lender's weapon of sham frankness against his own bosom, I made him a little speech to this effect.

"'Documents are better than a thousand questions and replies. Here are such family papers as I possess, quite open to your leisurely inspection. With my money embarrassments you are well acquainted. Of my poverty this room and this furniture plainly

speak. I have no other secrets. Every paper in this box is at your service to examine. It is right, considering the amount of money that may pass between us, that you should know all about me. You will find a good deal of my personal history in those neat little bundles. Here, for instance' (playing my trump card) 'is my baptismal certificate. There my affectionate and lamented father's. This is the resettlement of the Priory estates by Sir Sidney and my father, under which I hold my right to dispose of the reversion of that property in fee. There is an abstract of my grandfather Sir Richard Leyland's will—but that, I believe, you or Hake have already perused at Doctors' Commons. In fine, my good sir, read what you please, and as long as you please. Here is a sheet of paper and a pen, since you might like to make a note or two. I will take the newspaper, and will sit yonder in the window.' I was becoming fidgetty lest Ophelia should return. 'My time is yours. But I should like you to make your

inspection now and thoroughly, as I am going to suggest that our future interviews should be at your office. I will tell you why. My landlady is an old retired servant of the family' (not the case, of course); 'and something might get round to Redburn through her means about our negociations; servants will gossip so. I trust that you do not think me over-fidgetty in suggesting this precaution. You do not? Good. Then my family papers are before you. I retire to the news of the day, and the prospect from the window. If you find anything that puzzles you, do not hesitate to ask me to explain it. I have no worse secret than my insolvency.'

"Ivory took me at my word, and bestowed a most leisurely and exhaustive inspection upon the various packets of the deed-box. It was a dexterous trick to play, this of 'nothing to conceal.' It inspired confidence, and enabled Ivory to read for himself answers to several questions which it would have sorely puzzled me to reply to. Some documents—notably the resettlement deed between the

two brothers—Ivory craved leave to carry away with him. He would require them, he said, to help his lawyer to draw the conveyance of the reversion, in case we came to terms, as he felt confident now would be the case. Would that all his clients had my candour! I permitted him to carry them off, especially as he made me out a written receipt of their loan. There were still, he said, one or two points on which counsel would have to be consulted; but he anticipated now no difficulty in effectuating this transaction to our mutual satisfaction. He wanted county position in a remote future. I wanted hard cash in the immediate present. When should he see me at his office? I would wait upon him in three days' time, and so I got him away, most prosperously, all things considered. Surely, the dead lift of this business might now be considered over. Then, after a glass of wine and a sandwich, hurriedly taken at the Grapes, down the street, I settled down again to my essays in handwriting.

"Mrs. Dredge eventually returned in

hysterics and a four-wheeled cab. Martha Bulstrode and a gelatinous lady who let apartments a few doors off, were in requisition during the rest of the evening, brewing various cordials and administering sal-volatile. I do not think that Ophelia suspected any deception in the matter of the telegram. Dredge had so seldom kept any engagements or promises whatever during their married life, that it seemed only too accordant with his habitual shiftiness that he should not have put in an appearance on the Chelsea pier.

"But I must get on with the main thread of my story, and abridge as much as possible its minor episodes. On the appointed third day, I saw Ivory at his office; and after a slight parade of becoming hesitation, I agreed to take eight thousand pounds for my expectations. The deeds were to be ready for signature by that day week; the amount to be paid to me, there and then, in bank-notes at Ivory's office. This looked like business; but I had subsequently good reason

to believe that the money-lender was pressing on matters with all the speed he dared. He was, in fact, on thorns lest any side wind of gossip should carry word to Sir Sidney's ears of what was going forward. My chance and wholly fictitious statement that my landlady had held service in the Leyland family, had made Ivory resolve to use all prudent and reasonable expedition. The craftiest rascal has his vulnerable point. This known, and upon it a child may gull Machiavel. It seemed paradise itself to this shallow knave to become a squire in expectancy.

"Well, the intermediate week dragged out its weary length, slowly enough to my impatience. I reflected, with grim irony, at what a rate the conveyancers' quills must be going in some smoke-dried attics of Chancery Lane. How fast and sure these worthy gentry thought they were forging their cast-iron clauses and adamantime provisoes, all in the giant Ivory's advantage and none in the dwarf Julian's! It was like

a treaty dictated by an enemy in the streets of the conquered nation's capital. Did not the strong, rigid syllables affect to strip a visionary Julian clean of every right with which the past had ever invested him; naked and bare of every claim with which the most remote future might endow himself or his posterity? How merrily went on the music of the creaking quills across those acres of parchment! Ivory, no doubt, as the day of completion drew on, dreamed delicious dreams, in his snugly carpetted office, of quarter-sessional dignity and a deputy-lieutenant's uniform radiant at St. James's. As the usurer sat, according to his daily wont, conciliating the mammon of unrighteousness, he fell no doubt to reflecting complacently of how featly those legal instruments, a-sharpening for him, were flaking off poor Julian's property, skin by skin, and envelope by envelope; till, onion-like, the victim ended in nothing at all.

"Good Marsyas of Grayfriars, spare thy tender pains! Thou art flaying a shadow,

an air-phantom, a pinch of dust in a pauper grave. Ixion-like, thou wouldst embrace the receding cloud of gentility. Wilt thou beget little centaurs, to trundle their hoops hereafter along the gravelled walks of Redburn Priory? Well, well; excuse this rhapsody; but it did me good to think how I should cheat my two arch foes, the Lawyer and the Jew, at one swoop. The sweet remembrance of this, even now, has drawn a dithyrambic note of pæan from this poor drooping jail-bird.

"But I really must get on. The day of destiny arrived; and I walked into Ivory's office with the tread of a bridegroom. I sealed, signed, and delivered, as my act and deed; I made over, with a flirt of my pen and a pressure of my seal-rested forefinger, Redburn Priory, with all its trees, turf, woods, ways, fields, moors, downs, hills, dales, uplands, and valleys, as far down as to Tartarus, and as far up as to the zenith-star, to that smirking Israelite, who counted out so grudgingly the crisping notes into

my itching fingers. I might as well have made over to him the Swiss Republic, or a plantation in the middle star of Orion's belt.

"The deed was done. I walked out of the office a head taller among the common herds of men upon the City pavement; who jostled and pushed me about much as usual; who seemed to notice no change in my appearance; who brushed by, without bow or obeisance, the gentleman who had eight thousand pounds in his pocket! The crossing sweeper did not even ask me for a halfpenny. Ill-starred youth, in the flush of my new-found fortune I should have bestowed on him assuredly nothing less than half a crown. How I got home I know not. I trod upon air. The streets were paved with gold, as in the child's old story-book. I thought everybody else so miserably poor! What a wretched hole was this parlour of mine at Islington! What an ill savoury street, what a tedious landlady! O divine Plutus, thou art all things—beauty, and

wisdom, and eternal peace! Let the nations kneel to thy money-bags for ever! I suppose I calmed down by degrees.

"Mrs. Dredge must have thought me strangely excited, and, doubtless, put it down to the usual cause whereby her lodgers deported themselves strangely. Sleep was out of the question, until the grey dawn began to lift beyond the Seymour Street chimney-pots. Then I sank into a fitful doze, and dreamt that I had really become Julian Leyland; and that I lay, stark and stiff, looking up to heaven without power of motion on the hill-side above Redburn, while a damsel, fair as the sunrise, came and knelt beside me, pitying, and calling me endearing names, and still I could not rise, though I heard her voice through my trance like the sound of a summer rivulet."

CHAPTER VIII.

ARCHER CONTINUES.

"You express surprise that, having secured my booty, I should have deliberately returned into the lion's mouth; in other words, have retraced my steps to lodgings, where any chance word of my landlady's would have scattered my personation scheme to the four winds of heaven, and handed me over to that policeman, whose morning compliments were the one bright circumstance in our maid-of-all-work's day of drudgery and domestic martyrdom. Yet I feel assured that in this case the boldest policy was the safest. *I meant my roguery never to be discovered.* I had resolved to obliterate Gilbert Archer, and I intended to slay Julian Leyland a

second time after my own device. With these intentions, clearly nothing would have been more rash than a hurried exodus from Seymour Street.

"Next morning, I did break up my camp, but the removal was most openly and honourably accomplished. I told Ophelia that Julian had written to me that day from Brighton, where, under doctor's advice, he was now residing. He had been recommended sea-bathing, I said, and it seemed to be doing him good. He had not written before, because he had been moving about from place to place. He wished me, if I could, to go down and see him before I sailed for Melbourne. That he had begged me to transmit these tidings of his whereabouts to Mrs. Dredge, to whom he meant shortly to write. Meantime, he forwarded through me a five-pound note, out of which Ophelia was to defray herself such rent arrears as Julian still owed her. I paid also my own account to the uttermost farthing, and astonished the impassive

Martha Bulstrode with the liberality of my *douceur*.

"I left Julian's room and documents just as they were. Not a scrap of paper did I remove. I tied up together all the correspondence which had passed between Hake and the real Julian in the earlier stages of the reversion sale. These I docketted with a memorandum in Julian's feigned handwriting, that the sale was completed on such and such a date. I confided the room and its contents rather specially to Ophelia's care, and gave her to understand that some of the papers were important. I then called a cab to the door, and drove off in open day on the best of terms with Ophelia.

"My next journey was to the Docks. The good ship *Norfolk*, in which my berth was already taken and paid for as passenger to Melbourne, was completing her cargo, and meant to drop down the river on the following Sunday. I had been once already on board in Julian's lifetime, long before any idea was mooted of the golden windfall in

store for me. Now in England I meant to remain: that was self-evident. Archer poor might submit to expatriation; but Archer rich preferred to stay at home, and taste the goblet of prosperity at length commended to his lips. Simply not to appear on the sailing day, and to allow the ship to start without me, seemed but a crude and clumsy solution of the dilemma; upon which I felt pretty sure that I could improve. So it turned out. I hung about the ship's side without actually going on board. I got into conversation with a number of the emigrants, and endeavoured to ascertain their characters and family affairs. I managed, with some little trouble, to get hold of the man I wanted. He was a young Irish pupil teacher, paid out by the Colonial Government to take charge of a school some 200 miles north-east of Melbourne. He told me, with evident pride, that the day he reached the scene of his future labours he would have an excellent house and a hundred and twenty pounds a year; and, the best of it was, that it would not cost him a penny out of his

own purse to get there. On the strength of these brilliant prospects, he was taking out with him a girl-wife. The only regrettable circumstance was that his wife's brother, a cripple, though ready enough to accompany them, must, on the score of expense, remain behind. And, inasmuch as the two had been orphans together from infancy, and without other relatives, the case was a very hard one. Here was my very man. It was all arranged in a quarter of an hour. Tom Pringle, with his club-foot, was soon summoned. He was seeing the last of his sister, and, I fancy, of a good deal of bottled ale, at the Crown and Anchor, a maritime house of call, hard by the landing stage. For a free passage to Melbourne and three pounds as his *viaticum*, he cheerfully consented to sail in the berth and by the style of Gilbert Archer. I suggested that, as a matter of precaution, he and his relatives should assume a distant deportment towards each other for the first few days of the voyage. After the vessel stood well out to sea, they might appear to have origin-

ated an intimacy on deck. Our compact was that Pringle should remain Gilbert Archer until he was clear of the ship in Melbourne harbour. That his sister and brother-in-law should on all occasions, until their arrival, address him as Archer. In Australia he might resume his original patronymic. As a test that his sailing in my place was feasible, I handed over to him, there and then, my receipt for the passage-money and berth ticket. I bade him step stoutly at once on board, announce himself to the steward as Archer, ask to inspect his berth, and report the result to us at the Crown and Anchor. In half an hour, Pringle had made his way back and reported himself as duly installed in my cabin, without suspicion or impediment on the part of the ship's authorities. The gratitude of the three emigrants was profuse; and, after drinking to their success in the colony and wishing the party a prosperous voyage, I took my leave of them at the ship's side.

"Having thus, in obedience to the anxiety of my friends, shipped off an imaginary

Archer to the antipodes, my next step was to convert gradually into gold the mass of notes in my possession. It was important, as will be seen, that these notes should leave the hands of the supposed Julian, before the next and indeed closing event in the history, which I was about to append to him. I had a battered and shabby carpet-bag, and in this I carried my treasure. Its outside suggested nothing but brushes, boots, and a change of linen. With this I went down to Brighton, to put the last finishing touch to this domestic tragedy. I selected my furnished apartments with care: the parades and marine terraces were empty, and I had ample choice. I hardly looked at the rooms, but I narrowly in each case scrutinized the people of the house. I wanted folks sharp enough to observe, and yet not sharp enough to reason upon my intended proceedings. At length, I fixed myself at 102, Burlington Street, in one of the side roads, leading down to the Marine Parade.

"I took these apartments as Julian Leyland,

and wrote to Ophelia, dating thence, as Julian Leyland also. I could imitate my friend's hand very glibly by this time; in fact, I had practised his autography with a diligence worthy of a better cause. I made Julian announce to his Islington landlady that his health had materially improved; that his Brighton lodgings were comfortable, and that he meant to remain there for the present; that all letters and bills which arrived for him at Seymour Street, were to be forwarded to Brighton; that his prospects in a monetary sense were vastly better; that he was bathing on every mild day, and that he derived much benefit from the process.

"Ophelia replied that she rejoiced to hear of Mr. Leyland's convalescence, and she enclosed a few bills and one or two circulars; all important in this, that they would hereafter connect the Brighton lodger unmistakably with Julian. I forgot to say that, though I had left all Julian's papers intact in Seymour Street, I had abstracted from his bedroom a suit of Julian's clothes, a pair of

his boots, adding stockings, shirt, and handkerchief, all marked with his name. I was now ready to play my last card; but I lived a week in my Brighton lodgings, to give things a better look. The people of the house knew, from the wet towels I brought home, that I bathed habitually; and I took care to inform them that I bathed from the beach, and did not use a machine.

"One day, on my return, I rather ostentatiously borrowed a thimbleful of brandy from the landlady, Mrs. Hoppey, alleging, in a careless and off-hand way, that while in the water I had had a slight attack of cramp. I suffered two more days to elapse, and on the third, a thundery and sultry afternoon, I thus dismissed Julian Leyland to the shades. Before I went out, I placed some directed envelopes conspicuously on the parlour table, one to Mrs. Dredge in Seymour Street, one to Ivory and Co. in the City, and one to Sir Sidney Leyland at Redburn Priory. I strewed the bills and circulars from London directed to Julian artistically about the room,

and after borrowing two towels of the landlady, and saying that I felt the thunder, I went away to bathe. They never saw me again. I passed rapidly out of Brighton on the Cliftonville side, and walking through the ship-yard and gas works at Aldrington basin, I continued along the narrow and solitary tongue of shingle which extends beyond the gas works, and lies between them and the lock-gates at Southwick. About half way, I sat down on the sea-wall. To gather samphire here was by no means the dreadful trade that Shakspeare imagined it. It filled every chink and cranny of the breakwater. The storm was coming somewhere over Dieppe; but to the north and west not a cloud was in the heavens. No living thing was near me, except one grey-and-black, suspicious-looking Royston crow, who plainly thought I was up to no good, and hung curiously about my movements. Metempsychosis is absurd, yet I really seemed to catch a look of Julian in his lack-lustre, beady eyes; but, being overwrought and intensely excited,

any absurd fancy was free to fasten upon me. However, my after-movements were methodical enough.

"First, I consulted my watch, and then I referred to Bradshaw. I wished to leave myself just an hour to catch the Portsmouth train at Southwick station. Then, I produced my shaving tackle, and wedged up against the sea-wall a small square looking-glass. Off came the moustache and imperial which I had worn since my earliest manhood. Their loss did not, however, alter me so much as I expected. My next step was to untie my bundle, which contained those habiliments of Julian's which I had abstracted from his wardrobe in Seymour Street. I laid the various items in a carefully studied semi-circle upon the shingle. These were the two boots, and its respective stocking inside each; coat, trowsers, and waistcoat, folded neatly together, with a large blue boulder to keep them steady. Three and sixpence in the pockets, and quite enough, too; the first finder only would be any the wiser. Several

letters addressed to Mr. Julian Leyland, at 102, Burlington Street, Brighton. The shirt, initialed J. L., I rolled up into a tight bundle, handy. Collar and neckerchief completed the derelict property of the supposed bather. At the last moment I found the hat had quite slipped my memory; that had remained on its peg in Islington. Never mind; one cannot do everything perfect. As a concluding touch, I was just about to soak the two borrowed Brighton towels in the sea, previous to placing them side by side with the other clothes; but a moment's reflection showed me the absurdity of any such proceeding. Julian was never to return from the greedy ocean to use them; therefore, I arranged the towels on the beach *dry*. The first few large drops of the storm fell, as I had completed my arrangement. I wished for nothing better than a deluge of the elements to cover my flight.

"Casting one glance of pardonable pride at the *exuviæ* of the missing bather, I bade good night to Julian Leyland, and to all that con-

cerned him, and rushed hurriedly along the shores in the direction of Southwick. In twenty-five minutes I had crossed the lock-gates to the main land; and, within an hour, I was seated in the Portsmouth train, whirling away to the West of England. Meanwhile, the rain descended in torrents, and the window of the railway carriage streamed with the driving sleet of the tempest. Looking inland, as the train passed Worthing, I could scarcely discern the range of downs above Broadwater. Heaven and earth seemed jumbled together in a dense blanket of vapour; upon which the lightnings played with singular vividness. I felt somehow thankful for the storm; it had driven the idlers home out of the main street at Southwick; and it would prevent the empty clothes being found too soon on the Aldrington shingle.

"I quitted the train short of Portsmouth, and pushed on, by way of Southampton, towards the extreme West of England. I had studied my route beforehand in the time-tables. I changed my carriage nearly half a dozen times

before I reached my destination. I travelled all that night and far on into the next day. Then I reached my proposed bourn; it was Penzance, in Cornwall. You may be sure that my Pactolian carpet-bag did not go in the luggage van. I reclined against it, as a pillow, through the watches of that dark and weary journey. I did not complain of its hardness, nor sigh for a couch of eider-down in its stead. In the Cornish town I began a new life and a new career. I buried Gilbert Archer as deep as the antipodes; he need never have been exhumed. You, my good Mr. Satchell, have been the sexton to dig him up again. At Penzance I became Mr. Vincent Snabley. I saw the name on an unclaimed portmanteau in the lost luggage office at Southampton station, and it did as well as any other. I felt a sympathy for that portmanteau. I, too, was a foundling in this workhouse of a universe, and Snabley should be my sponsor and my patron saint.

"With capital all things are easy. I opened a modest account at the leading banker's in

the little city. I took a good but not expensive villa on its outskirts. I attended church regularly. I subscribed to local charities. By degrees, I increased the deposit at my banker's, and I began to be deferred to as a person of some consideration.

"How easy it is, my good, unconvicted sir, to be respectable on eight thousand pounds! A man is but what his circumstances make him. Till I got this cash, I was a vagabond, a derelict, a ne'er-do-well: when I got this cash I became a pillar of Church and State, a buttress of our historical Constitution; a few years might have seen me churchwarden! *Credite posteri!* You and the myrmidons of justice have rudely snapped that dream. You have torn me from my orbit of prosperity and benevolence; you have re-associated me with rascaldom and vagabondism. So be it. Everything is luck in the world. After all, I am no worse than I was. After all, I have tasted the sweets of affluence, and whitened the sepulchre of my past with the best of my psalm-singing neighbours in the

West. Pity that this iridescent bubble burst so soon!

"I have done, young squire of Redburn. I bear you personally no grudge; and, in fact, aggrieved as I feel, I am quite ready to shake hands upon the whole business. I shall think of you all, while I am enjoying the exhilarating breezes of Dartmoor, or blasting the Portland quarries. The philosopher can accommodate himself to any change of fortune. Cervantes was a prisoner in the galleys; Æsop was a slave. I shall write my adventures some day, and publish them by subscription. Remember me to Rupert Ivory; I deserve a monument in Redburn market-place for having duped that genial crocodile. The bottle is ended, and the day wanes. The wine of life is drunk out. My Satchell looks wearily—estimable attorney! he has travelled all night—and the turnkey snores harmoniously outside. You have heard my adventures now, and I will make any further written admissions required. And now, I see you are going. Well, the best of friends must part. Good

day, Mr. Satchell; Mr. Leyland, *au revoir*. My sincere regrets to Lady Leyland. Remember that she hears I confess to save her further annoyance. Heigho! I am sleepy too."

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

THE verdict of the coroner's inquest, next day duly held at the Priory, owing to Mr. Satchell's vigorous intervention on Archer's behalf, practically exonerated the prisoner at Stembury. Lady Leyland had also appeared anxious that the jury should record some such lenient view of the catastrophe. Archer's message regarding his main motive for confession had been duly communicated to her, and she fully seconded and endorsed the complexion given by the lawyer to the fatal affray at the ling hut.

Sir Sidney was buried five days after, with much ceremonial observance and full feudal honours. Mourning coaches were as plentiful

as blackberries and nearly of the same colour. There was a forest of feathers on the hearse. There were walking mutes beyond all computation. The neighbouring gentry came forward with an array of broughams, landaus, and glass coaches, that must have gladdened any reasonable dead plutocrat who could have arisen to witness his own obsequies. There was a quarter of a mile of tenants, riding two and two, all be-scarved and be-hatbanded at the expense of the family. Mr. Mildew, the Stembury upholsterer, felt this day of death to be the proudest one of his existence. The manes and tails of the six black horses that were privileged to draw the departed baronet, were in the primest and most sweeping condition. Their coats were shiny enough for a man to shave in them. Never had Mr. Mildew's satellites been cleaner, or, with a few exceptions, more afflictedly sober. Mr. Sinclair Blaggs did full justice to the velvet trappings, the staves, the metal work, the extra-super handles, and the personal exertions of Mr. Mildew, and his foreman, Mr. Ashbin, in the

columns of the *Western Juno.* And Mr. Mildew ultimately did full justice to himself and his own exertions in a thumping bill of three figures, which he presently sent in to the family.

So Sir Sidney slept in glory, like a king of the earth, with his fathers, beneath the calm faces and pressed palms of the stone crusaders in Redburn Church chancel. And it was difficult to learn who was any the better for all this feudal display, except Mr. Mildew, the Stenbury undertaker.

However, the neighbourhood, as represented by Mrs. Hammersley and Mr. Delvey Podge, its two most articulate voices, decided that things had been well done, and that a great deal of good feeling had been shown. These oracles of county opinion might have added that a great deal of hard feeding and no less hard drinking had been dedicated to the manes of the departed baronet, after the fashion of all barbarous Western nations. For, when all was done, and the stonemasons were re-pointing and re-adjusting the chancel

pavement, the real business of the day had commenced. The equestrian tenantry dismounted, and became a carnivorous and even a bibulous tenantry, settling down round huge steaming joints in the Priory servants' hall, like so many black flesh-flies. If the respect in which Sir Sidney was held could be gauged in ebbing hogsheads of liquor, or weighed out in subsiding mountains of bull beef, then indeed the general affliction was so deep that no plummet-line of obituary comment can hope to fathom its profundity. If grief is measurable by yards of hatband, and grosses of black gloves, then the genius of Blankshire may be symbolized, sitting on that day as a forlorn Niobe, in crape and weepers, to watch the interment of her aristocratic son.

Mr. Rupert Ivory had mastered his particular quota in the general affliction of fashionable Blankshire sufficiently to despatch one letter to the widow of Sir Sidney and another to the lawyer of Sir Sidney, on the very night of the funeral. Ivory doubtless felt that business was business, even though

baronets went to the ground. So Ivory grasped his pen, and, laying aside his pocket-handkerchief, wrote in a vein somewhat menacing and peremptory both to Lady Leyland and Mr. Satchell. The considerate creature had possibly persuaded himself that to convey a painful communication in sugared words would be but a mockery of kindness. So the purport of each missive simply was—When would it be convenient for Lady Leyland to turn out of the Priory; and when would it be convenient for Rupert Ivory to march in?

Satchell replied, with a certain dry humour, that the money-lender might march in at the Greek calends or at latter Lammas. But that until then, for the present, Sir Sidney's rightful heir and Julian's rightful heir, Richard Leyland, was in the Priory, and meant there to abide. Satchell went on to inform Ivory that, as the money-lender had been present at Archer's examination in the Stembury court-house, Ivory must by this time know as well as his correspondent, that the purchase deed of

the Redburn reversion was not worth the parchment on which it was written. Satchell would now tell Ivory, what Ivory affected still to ignore—that the signature to that instrument was a forged one, appended by Gilbert Archer; that Julian Leyland, whom Archer had personated in Ivory's office, was at that time under the sward of Redburn Church, and the transaction was null and void.

Rupert Ivory, in reply, threatened to prosecute Satchell for conspiring with a felon to deprive him of his rights, and he gave Richard and the widow three days to clear out. At the end of this term of grace, Ivory presented himself at the Priory gates, supported by the whole staff of his London clerks, and proceeded to effect an 'entrance *vi et armis*. David Rattenworth, with a brigade of keepers and rabbit-catchers, easily repelled and routed the assailants: Ivory, like all great generals, realized the fact that it was not right to his army to expose his own valuable person; consequently, his City contingent made a very

half-hearted attack. As the routed troop, however, retreated through Redburn village, the blacksmith, with his two grimy hobbledehoys, plunged into the discomfited phalanx; and, seizing the bulky money-lender in their brawny arms, bore him to the goose-pond on Redburn village green, in which he was thoroughly immersed, his clerks basely flying in all directions. He crawled forth at last, the black streams running from his hair, his nose, his coat-cuffs, and the bottoms of his trousers; his back plastered with mire, and green with duck-weed; himself sputtering, inarticulate, blue-black in the face, bareheaded; his hat lost in the sludge for ever. In this condition he had to traverse the road to Tamerton. His following of village boys swelled at every cottage which he passed. Next morning, having re-adonized himself into the burnished and shining Rupert Ivory of our earlier acquaintance, he carried his injuries to Mr. Delvey Podge, and applied for a summons against his assailants. This the Blankshire Minos refused to grant, being at

least in that instance right in equity if wrong in law.

Ivory had waited to commence his campaign until Sir Sydney was underground. But Mrs. Atherton, away in Norfolk, refused even to allow Richard an interval of truce to bury his dead. Prompter even than the usurer, that matrimonial freebooter wrote to Richard, three days after his uncle's decease, bidding him, so to speak, stand and deliver. The wrongs, or imagined wrongs, of her daughter in this letter fired Mrs. Atherton's pen with an unearthly and almost hectic eloquence. Richard Leyland, the widow prologized, had entangled her artless and confiding child into what he was pleased to call an engagement. The mother, therefore, begged him to state in black and white (perhaps the lady meant in halfpence and shillings), what means he had of maintaining a wife at all. Further, Mrs. Atherton desired, by return of post, to be explicitly informed, on the strength of what prospects Richard Leyland had aspired to the hand of her highly connected Edith. Could

he maintain her daughter in that position of life to which, as niece of Lord Crowbury, she had been called by Providence?

With this fine catechismal peroration the widow was fain to conclude. It is hardly necessary to say, that Satchell and Richard were then keeping very quiet for the nonce the subject of Archer's confession, with a view to watching what move Ivory would make. Had Mrs. Atherton not been in so violent a hurry, that astute campaigner would have materially modified her letter, three weeks later on. Perhaps Richard, too, feared some such change of front, for he did answer instantly and by return of post, but he wrote directly to Edith, and ignored her mother. To Edith he simply said that he would either abide by his word or release Edith from their engagement, whichever Edith wished; that he declined to enter upon the subject of his means or the question of his prospects; whatever he had, Edith would share. He would only take his answer from Edith, and not from Mrs. Atherton. On this, Edith, under her mother's

coercion and influence, wrote and deliberately threw him over.

The conclusion of these negociations took place about four days after the funeral. By that time, Richard found himself, matrimonially speaking, a free man. Can we wonder, then, that he instantly sent a message to Salvia, entreating her to accord him the grace of one more meeting at the cairn on Stonesdale Ridge. They met. Richard told Salvia how Edith Atherton had rejected him. Richard said he was free now, but lonely and without a soul to love him. Richard confessed that he did not deserve forgiveness at Salvia's hands. He had been fickle, suspicious, arbitrary; yet Salvia was an angel of pity, and would she forgive him and become his wife? Salvia's only answer was —that she kissed Richard and began to cry. But, soon cheering up, the old happy, careless Arcadia rebloomed upon those now brown and barren October heights. Richard, after a while, said he had something very serious to tell her, if she could bear it then. Salvia, in

reply, supposed Richard meant to tell her how poor he was, and how poor they would be together. But, if it was that, she knew it already. Richard, after a short debate with himself, decided not to undeceive her on these points at that interview. He found it so delicious being loved wholly and solely for himself, that he was reluctant to alloy their happiness with worldly respects for the present. But the secret of the wanderer he would tell her. No time or place could be more appropriate for this announcement. They sat them down, side by side, like two children, upon the dead man's cairn; and there and then Richard told her, that she had found his cousin, Julian Leyland, who, had he lived, would now have been master of all that valley below them; but that Julian had dropped down on the hill-side, journeying to the Priory to entreat assistance from his uncle. Richard went on to tell her how rightly she had recognized that weird likeness to himself in the dead features; and how, stranger still, a chance entry in the old

prayer-book, her gift, had established Julian's identity, when even the crafty lawyer Satchell was baffled; and that, save for this book, Lady Leyland would then have been an outcast from the Priory. And that—— Here Richard again paused, and could not tell Salvia of his changed position.

Salvia was in that childlike state of happiness which precludes all further power of being astonished. Richard was just restored to her as by a miracle. What could move her after such a sweet, supreme surprise? The story which she heard sounded like enchantment. But all was so strange that day, that she listened more awed than astonished. She had always insisted on some bond between Richard and the wanderer. She had always felt the prayer-book would prove useful. What was there unnatural in all this? Her dreams had merely come true. But her greatest dream, that of Richard restored to her, having come true just before, she had no capacity in her mind for wonder at the accomplishment of her lesser visions.

Now must also Richard tell her, just before they parted, that she must be ready on the next morning to go up with him to the Priory, to see Lady Leyland, as his future wife. At which impending visit did Salvia become grievously fluttered and disturbed, and declared it was impossible for her to accompany Richard on such a visit, inasmuch, as she piteously told her lover, she had nothing to put on. Richard then insisted that she should wear that same old serge dress (and no other) in which he had first seen her reading Ossian on Julian's cairn. At the appointed hour on the morrow Richard came to fetch her. And they walked up together, simply enough, arm in arm, in through the gaunt lodge gates, on each side of which a colossal heraldic merlin seemed to flap its stony wings in disapproval at poor Salvia. Thence on they passed, under lordly avenues of chestnuts; under oaks umbrageous, with Titanic boles and vast outreaching arms of foliage; under the blue-black canopies of cedars, worthy of root upon the spurs of Lebanon itself. On they passed,

through the green lawns where ploughshare had never bitten; between the herds of feeding deer. Then came the flower garden, gaudy in asters and hollyhocks, and then the sculptured doorway of the Priory itself. And here Salvia felt utterly terrified, and besought Richard not to ring the bell, but to take her back. And Richard laughed at her dismay, and made light of it all; and he summoned, with a merry peal presently, Logwood and two long satellites, greyheaded, like the prisoner of Chillon, but not with age, who arrived, obsequious but not wholly incurious, to admit them. Between whom Salvia, ready to drop, must pass into the chill marble-floored entrance-hall, with busts and statues, and wall-hung spears and helmets and cross-bows.

More formidable still than all these terrors of the past, a vista of a portion of Miss Brimley in ambush behind the hats and umbrella stand, devoured by a ravening curiosity; and the arm of one housemaid and the leg of another, but imperfectly masked by

a Greek nymph at the bath and a Roman emperor respectively. This Charybdis passed with many shudders, Salvia must needs face the shining floors and reverberating echoes of the great picture gallery, Logwood throwing back the high folding doors, with the air of a man who was used to splendour, and didn't care a button for it all. Then, at Richard's side, with Logwood strutting on before them, must Salvia run the last and worse gauntlet of the ranged ancestral Leylands, each in his or her square of canvas for ever laid upon the walls. How they seemed to stare and frown! How much more lifelike these fixed shadows seemed, than Richard, or herself, or Mr. Logwood, the moving figures of the scene! Cavaliers in cuirass and leathern doublet, with battle smoke rolling away behind; gentlemen in flowing cauliflower wigs and flowery satin court suits, with thin, highbred features and slender, rather self-conscious hands. How these dead male Leylands of war or peace seemed to glare down on the shrinking Salvia with supercilious

disfavour! As for the ladies, the court beauties by Lely, they were even harder upon her than their husbands and brothers. These various allegorized Dianas and St. Cecilias, with arrows or angels—and in both cases no great superabundance of upper drapery—emphatically turned up their noses at the plain serge dress, and disowned Salvia outright. Still Salvia struggled on; at one end of the long gallery lay the door of the state drawing-room, and this portal seemed to Salvia a haven of peace. Anything was better than all these painted, crowding, curious Leyland faces. Here Logwood electrified Salvia by announcing her name, upon which Logwood melted away; and Salvia, in a mist of shyness, saw Lady Leyland in black coming forward with a bank of brilliant exotics behind her. The widow received Salvia most affectionately, and began to talk of indifferent subjects. Salvia was becoming almost at her ease, and Richard was joking about some incident of their arrival, when a chance remark from Lady Leyland revealed to Salvia

the altered state of things, and the poor overwrought girl fainted away there and then in the Priory drawing-room.

Salvia and Richard were married in about two months' time in Redburn Church, by Mr. Richmond. Everything was done as quietly as possible. Sir Sidney's recent death supplied an excuse for dispensing with bridesmaids, invitations to the quality of Blankshire, postboys, white horses, and the usual fashionable paraphernalia of such occasions. The bells, however, rang merrily in the old belfry, and the village children strewed flowers. The crones and old men had a tea upon the green, and the boys and girls a dance in honour of the wedding. Mrs. Hammersley was much scandalized at these maimed rites, and declared it was disgraceful. Salvia had been married like a servant girl, and she feared that Salvia's tastes were incurably low, notwithstanding her luck in securing Richard Leyland; that Sir Sidney had always been a gentleman, and had gone to the ground as such. But, under the new *régime*, Mrs. Hammersley

predicted a very degenerate state of things at the Priory. But then, she said with a sniff, what could one expect, when young men let themselves down? Had Salvia been married, however, with the usual upper-class apparatus and display, there is every reason to believe that Mrs. Hammersley would have been equally severe upon the bride on the score of ostentation. Indeed, a recent incident in Mrs. Hammersley's checkered career had caused her to throw an eye of great disfavour on these nuptials.

Satchell, when his hands were clear of matters more urgent, had duly brought Mrs. Hammersley to book respecting the anonymous letter. The envelope and paper were traced to a Stembury stationer, where Mrs. Hammersley dealt, and her detection proved, from other minor corroborations, an easy matter. After an infinite amount of prevarication, she turned king's evidence on Mrs. Atherton, and laid the whole blame at that great tactician's doors. There had been, she declared, this compact between the two ladies: Mrs. Ather-

ton, on her side, promised that Lord Crowbury should present Charles Meadows to a certain vacant living; Mrs. Hammersley, on her side, engaged to compose such an anonymous letter as should cause a rupture between Richard and Salvia. Mrs. Hammersley told Satchell, with tears, that while she had done her share, both Mrs. Atherton and Lord Crowbury had shamefully failed in their portion of the engagement. Mrs. Hammersley next excused herself, with more tears, on the ground that she had acted purely from stress of maternal affection. Mrs. Hammersley, lastly, dried her eyes, and took the higher ground, that the letter was true, every word, and she would abide by it. Satchell, however, having given Mrs. Hammersley notice that he intended to take the matter before a jury, she broke down, and indited and duly signed a most humble and abject apology, dictated by the lawyer. After this, Mrs. Hammersley could hardly be expected to appear as a lenient critic of the Leyland wedding.

Archer pleaded guilty at the next county assizes. He accordingly received a lighter sentence—seven years' penal servitude. At the expiration of that time, he really proceeded to Melbourne, Richard and Lady Leyland providing the means for his passage; and he is now farming in a small way in that colony.

Ivory did not prosper in his wooing of Edith Atherton. Indeed, he lost even her mother's support after his designs upon the Priory estate had collapsed. An unlanded money-lender could not aspire to alliance with Lord Crowbury's niece. After his immersion in the goose-pond on Redburn green, Blankshire society turned a cold shoulder upon the money-lender. Miss Whiffle pretended not to know him, and Charlie Mayne responded only to Ivory's bow with a stony stare through his eye-glass. The rural dean feared Mr. Ivory's Church principles were far from sound, and had been informed that Mr. Ivory's extraction was Mosaic. The Honourable Tom Holster, whom Jerry Pickett had informed of the slaughter

of the sacred beast, swore by the bones of Nimrod that such fellows ought to be cut. With a heavy heart, Rupert Ivory shook off the dust of his feet against Blankshire, and departed. He under-let Tamerton Cottage, and took a suburban villa instead. He relapsed to his usurious pursuits in the City, and has grown immensely rich.

Edith Atherton, after much marching and counter-marching on the part of her indefatigable mother, was ultimately very brilliantly established. She was led, in fact, to the altar by no less a personage than Viscount Starling, her cousin, Lord Crowbury's eldest son. After a success so astounding, Mrs. Atherton reposed upon her laurels, signed a truce with humanity, and ceased to harry eligible young men.

Charles Meadows married Lucy Hammersley, after a futile attempt to run away. It was whispered that he had some vague scheme of taking refuge in a monastery abroad. He got no further than Leatherbarrow, whence Mrs. Hammersley fetched

him back in a gig in no time, and his doom was sealed. The wedding took place in a week. Mr. Hammersley read the service, and Mrs. Hammersley made the responses for the bridegroom. Meadows has not yet got a living. Perhaps our mention of this fact may be serviceable to him in the way of an advertisement. He subsists by taking chance duty in a radius around Stembury—a clerical position which the Blankshire dialect irreverently names a "Jack-at-a-pinch."

Lady Leyland, after residing for a few months with the young people, and starting Salvia in the duties of her new position, retired to her own estates in Lincolnshire.

Mr. Delvey Podge judged Blankshire for many years, and died full of years and honours. On one occasion, he was even selected by one section of the Conservative party as their candidate in a vacancy of the county membership. He had just time to compose a very remarkable address, in which he expressed himself as holding by the

bulwarks of the Constitution and abiding in all things by the wisdom of our ancestors; but, unluckily, the other clique of county politicians started a better candidate, quite as dull as Podge but with a much heavier purse; whereupon his own followers voted Podge a fish slice for his patriotic readiness in coming forward, and went over *en masse* to the other camp. Whether Podge would have commanded the applause of listening senates under Big Ben, can never now be known, for the shears of Atropos have just silenced the lips at which Blankshire was wont to gather forensic honey.

Mr. Satchell contracted a liking for Blankshire and country pursuits, and after Ivory had vacated it, took Tamerton Cottage. Here, during the Long Vacation, he lived a life of extreme rurality, in which he was aided and abetted by Hickory, his clerk. They both endeavoured to disguise themselves as farmers, and walked about with spuds, and in dumpling hats. They even

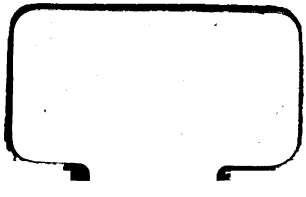
affected the Blankshire accent. They lost heavily in sheep, hay, and turnips. They became great on drainage and bone dust. They were both much hurt by any allusion to their legal avocations.

Mr. Richmond, some years after these events, issued his masterly monograph on the land and fresh-water mollusca of Blankshire. The frontispiece depicted a horse-mussel containing a real pearl, dredged from the goose-pond on Redburn green; in which another pearl of great price had only received a temporary immersion. Mr. Richmond has also collected materials for a treatise on the natter-jack toad, which every one knows has a stripe down his back, while the common toad has none. This he proposes to publish by subscription; but beyond his daughter and son-in-law few subscribers have as yet come forward.

Richard and Salvia lived happily, and did their county duties well. They were neither of them cut out upon the traditional pattern

of Blankshire squirearchy; but Blankshire generously forgave their shortcomings, on account of their position as owners of Redburn Priory.

And now the curtain falls, and my puppets are mute.

THE END.

PRINTED AT THE CAXTON PRESS, BECCLES. *S. & H.*